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ABSTRACT

The processes by which man creates new literary forms is the focus of this book. Four articles concentrate on literary modes common to many societies, though written in different languages: (1) Robert A. Charles reviews Alaska's oral native folktales and the range of the contemporary writing scene in Alaska from professional authors to documentary journalists; (2) Harley D. Oberhelman compares the cowboy literature of North, Central, and South America; (3) Maurice D. Schmaier analyzes Patrick White's "Voss" as an example of a new chapter in Australian literature; and (4) Helen Topham describes a grass-roots theater developing in India. Four other articles are concerned with world literature written in English: (1) Leonard Casper finds a great range of literary achievements in the American-influences Filipino-English literature; (2) Frederic G. Cassidy discusses the distinctive style and tone of West Indian literature; (3) Lucile Clifton illustrates how South African writers shape the African image through symbols and choice of themes; and (4) Harold R. Collins reports on the Nigerians writing about the meeting and interaction of Western and native cultures. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (JMC)

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WRITERS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HORIZON

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING LITERATURES OF THE WORLD

Edited by
PRISCILLA TYLER
University of Illinois

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PREFACE

The process by which the peoples of the world make new literary forms is the theme of this anthology. The articles bear witness to man's verbal engagement with his changing experience, to his development of new literary modes, varying as he varies, and to the emergence in each century of new literary communities. The work of some new literary communities seems to move into the future like "running springs," their new way with words sweeping the reaches of language as if to suggest that very little has yet been tried. The student of these new literatures faces the future, not the past. Three English literary communities have been developed in the twentieth century—in the Philippines, the Caribbean, and Africa. They differ from earlier English literary communities (Britain, American, Canada, Australia) because they coexist with those of other languages in a bilingual and multilingual society. English literacy in a world sense has a new breadth of meaning, implying, as it does, a knowledge of the literatures of growing numbers who speak English as a second language.

The articles in this series trace the process of emerging literatures in two world contexts: the world community of many languages and the world community of English. Papers in the first division discuss some literary modes common to different societies, though written in different languages. Those in the second division treat the newly developing segments of world English.

I. The World Community of Languages

The first article shows literature finding its place in the developing culture of Alaska. The mythology of the Indian and the American immigrants' response to their new land are reflected in the oral and written literary life of the forty-ninth state. That man's response to land from continent to continent has been similar, as the land has been similar, and that his folk and literary heroes reflect this similarity, though in different languages, is brought out by Oberhelman. The *gaucho* of the pampas, the *vaquero* of Mexico, the *llanero* of Venezuela, and the *cowboy* of North America are all the same horse-loving cattlemen on the grassy plains of both continents. As creative keepers of a vast land environment, the gaucho or the cowboy captures the imagination of storytellers and finds his place in folktale, song, and novel. In Australia, we see through an analysis of Patrick White's novel, *Voss,* another rehearsal in words of man's distinctive experience on a new continent. Topham describes how, in India, compelling experiences on a continent old in culture are worded for a new and growing contemporary theater.

II. The World Community of English

Three centers are producing new English literatures in the twentieth century: Africa, the West Indies, and the Philippines. These English literatures are developing in bilingual and multilingual societies. The impact of other languages is obvious in the more experimental of these writers. As we write in American English, so there are writers now in Filipino-English, Carib-English, and Africo-English. The writers of these Englishes, living as they do in a bilingual culture and speaking English as a second language, draw on the resources of their native language to enrich the world-English. Cassidy (West Indies) and Casper (Philippines) describe the decisions authors in bilingual societies must make as to the language they use. Harold Collins and Lucile Clifton in their studies of African novels are more concerned with the decisions authors must make as to the segment of culture which should be the substance of their writing. As King Arthur and his knights emerged as valid "matter" to write about in English (the matter of Britain) and the cowboy emerged as valid "matter" to write about in the Americas, African writers are discovering—with no precedents to guide them—what is "the matter of Africa." These authors extend our linguistic resources and our cultural understanding by their writings, and they do more than this. By writing in English, many are avowedly writing for a world audience. They renew in our time the Renaissance dream of a world audience for a world developed culture.

With one exception, these papers were given at the 1963 San Francisco convention of the National Council of Teachers of English. They, with others on similar topics, made the world community of language, and particularly that of English, one of the major themes of the conference. It is hoped that this book will be a reminder of the window on the world our classrooms may have through a world view of literature, especially literature in English. The book may be used in the classroom not only to establish concepts and give an overview but also to suggest specific works for group or individual reading. (Footnotes indicated within the text of an essay appear at the end of the essay.)

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I. The World Community of Languages

Alaska
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LITERATURE IN ALASKA

Robert A. Charles

The Aleut Eskimo and Indian folktales waiting to be recorded by the literate and imaginative interpreter, the zest for writing of all kinds stirring in ordinary men from Fairbanks to Anchorage, and the occasional works of artistry achieved by a few are reviewed with an enthusiasm and love for all things Alaskan in the following article by Robert A. Charles.

The subject, "Literature in Alaska," embraces here everything from the native literature—really, the anthropologist's subject of primitive Alaskan letters—to the belletristic *serious* writing that is being done right now in our forty-ninth state. The first, the native folklore literature, holds considerable variety, complexity, even immediacy. It is still very much alive: Old Eskimos can still be found at Point Barrow who can recite their inherited literature and recite it with some belief even though they now drive their whaleboats with *two* Johnson outboard motors. And the Eskimo is only one aspect. Native culture in Alaska is of three sorts. First, there is the Indian, mainly Tsimshian and Tlingit, extending through southeastern Alaska from Cook Inlet down through British Columbia. It is a coastal Indian culture related to that of the Nootkans, the Quillayutes, the Makaws, and other tribes traced down to the Olympic Peninsula. Second, there is a comparatively untouched ethnic group, half Indian, half Oriental—the Aleuts, with cultural remains that begin on the Alaskan peninsula proper and stretch far out into the Aleutian Islands, a people of which very little is known; their literature especially is mostly unrecorded. Third, and finally, there is the Eskimo culture, which means essentially the culture of the North Alaskan or Bering Strait Eskimo.

The culture generally accepted as Alaskan Indian culture has been recorded ever since Captain Cook's first observations in 1784. This is the totem culture, with variant initiation rites that are closely akin to the highly complicated masked-wolf ritual found as far south as Neah Bay in Washington State. The folktales are just as elaborate and complicated as the rituals and often as grotesque as the totems that awe the tourists. The basic ones are, as we would expect, origin stories, most of them accounting for the feats of Raven, the Creator and Transformer. The departure point for all this mythology is this:

> The Raven was the Transformer and Creator. Though the Raven taught man many useful arts, and supplied him with fish, fresh water and daylight, he also played tricks on humanity. The Raven held the sun, moon, and stars as his personal property, which he stole from the Chief of Nass River.
>
> When the Raven was hungry, he would outsmart fish or game to get food. As he wandered down from the north, he met whales, bears, king salmon, birds, and humans. Then it was dark all over. He went to the Chief's house and turned himself into a pine needle which floated into the water. When the chief's daughter drank the water, she swallowed the hemlock needle and became pregnant. The Raven was born as a human child and cried for the moon to play with. His grandfather finally gave the child the priceless treasure and the Raven rolled it around on the floor. He tossed it up through the smoke hole in the roof and it became the moon in the sky.
>
> Then the Raven begged for the box which he knew contained the light of the world. He cried and cried until finally his grandfather took down the box, which was more priceless than anything else the chief possessed. The boy stopped crying and played with the box. Finally he was able to fly away with the box in spite of the slaves watching him.

> He came to a camp and asked for food. When the people refused, he said, "If you do not give me food, I will open this box and you will turn into the animal whose skin you are now wearing." They laughed, and the Raven was so angry, he lifted the cover; then with a thundering flash, the world was light and the people turned into land and sea animals, and others turned into birds. Those who wore no clothing, remained humans.[1]

Around this rudimentary story of creation lies a vast complex of mythology, most of it recorded in the Ethnology Bulletins of the Smithsonian Institution. For this the credit belongs largely to the late Dr. Frank Boas and to the followers he inspired to continue his work, mainly at the Universities of Washington and Oregon. But though recorded, these myths have not been studied as literature. And with all their strange and subtle complications, certainly they deserve study. They are highly developed beyond the naive simplicity of the origin story. To be sure, all the mythic archetypes are there, but with mysterious variations—bewildering to interpret.

Of the Aleut literature not much can be said. There are only the most meager reports from the anthropologists, most of them Russian and American, some French. The last extensive research—again, a Smithsonian project in the late 1930's—found fewer than 1,000 Aleuts left on all the Islands, perhaps only two full-blooded ones. The project *did* finally establish the Aleuts as a separate culture indigenous to the Alaskan peninsula; and the extensive archeological finds at this point have ascertained at least that the original—and comparatively recent—Aleut culture did or does have a diversified literature of myths and songs, one wholly different from that of the coastal Indians and that of the Eskimos.

The Eskimos are divided by the ecologists into two groups, the inland and the maritime, who live mostly along the Bering Sea. Only the latter group has held its own in population during the twentieth century, and it has done so at the expense of the inland population, who seem steadily through the century to be moving seaward to join the maritime tribes. As a result, the Alaskan Eskimo population—and thus what remains of Eskimo art and literature—is concentrated along the North Bering Sea, and it is in the region around Barrow that the richest and most recent ethnographic studies have been conducted. These studies have preserved a bounty of Eskimo literature, though no systematic attempt at collection has yet been made. We do have written down for us a large part of what is otherwise an oral literature of songs and tales. Some broad observations have been drawn; some few studies of plot distribution have been made; some very few subsequent analyses and articles have appeared. Otherwise, this whole vast area remains unexplored.

Tales collected in the Barrow area show themes and motifs common to collections taken from the North American Indian and from Asian groups as well—recurrent raven mythology, magic-flight variants, the animal-wife motif, the so-called "trickster" mythology. Though entirely oral, the literature has an involved and complicated folklore. The tales possess for the Eskimo a purely entertainment value; neither the tales themselves nor their telling is endowed with any supernatural significance. On the other hand, the songs, known as *attuu*, underlie almost all the compulsive magic of Eskimo culture. Though they may well provide a recreational outlet, the songs are used specifically to control weather, hunting success, health, and general tribal welfare. Not so the folktales, which survive in their Stone Age language for the rude Stone Age pleasure they provide. Custom requires that two tales be told by any one storyteller. The teller acts out the parts of the characters, and his skill at mimicry is held to be as important as the tale itself. His audience knows beforehand the whole story in every small detail. And in keeping with the Eskimo's absolute passion for truth and accuracy, the teller's skill is judged by the integrity of his version: the slightest deviation by a single word lends his skill dubious. It is this feature that has doubtless preserved nearly intact the most ancient tales on the American continent. It is this feature also that makes one wonder at the involved development of this entirely oral literature, for it is by no means a plain and simple one.[2]

All three of these native literatures challenge the literary analyst. Volumes of translations are available; some tales are transcribed in some of the native languages. Even there much remains to be done, for the ethnologists have not yet found everything. Just about every issue of the Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska reports some newly discovered native myth. Yet, only this year has a qualified linguist, Dr. Michael Krauss, gone to work on the nearly extinct language of the Eyak Indian tribe, which has an independent history of several thousand years in south central Alaska. There remain right now fewer than ten tribal members who can speak Eyak. Dr. Krauss is devising an alphabet by which he hopes to preserve the vocabulary, the grammar, and perhaps some of the folklore, all of which are now unrecorded.[3]

Actual literary analysis of *any* of the native literature is rare. One finds published a New Mexico master's thesis titled "Aspects of the Epic in Eskimo Folklore."[4] One finds an occasional study of influence, such as "Changes in the Sedna Myth Among the Aivilik."[5] But these are exceptional and few. They are bare beginnings of the work that still needs to be done.

Contemporary writing is a different matter. What I must say first of all about the writing that is being done in Alaska right now is that there is so very very *much* of it. Alaska is "culture hungry" in all the arts; and the surge of creative activity is overwhelming. I am currently coediting the first *Alaska Literary Directory*, a project begun only four months ago. We are only now—in the last month or so— beginning to receive the returns of our requests for data. Already we have more than three hundred replies from Alaskan writers. On this basis we can reasonably expect returns eventually of at least six hundred—600 writers in a so-called primitive frontier state with a total population of slightly more than 200,000 people. Last year I was called upon to judge six different writing contests in less than six months. I can name more than eight different writing associations—including the Ketchikan Poetry Club (Ketchikan all told has 6,000 people). The *Anchorage Times* prints daily its "Poets' Corner," a large corner of the editorial page, from an overflow stockpile of amateur verse that floods the editor's desk. The annual *Anthology of Contemporary Alaskan Poetry* is now in its fourth year. Alaska has its own Poet Laureate, Margaret J. Mielke. Of course, not all of this activity can properly be labelled "literature," but at least five kinds of writing do deserve our attention.

First, there are the successful commercial writers who deal in Alaskana—the homestead stories for the *Post, Reader's Digest, Ladies' Home Journal,* even *Harper's*; and the hunting and fishing stories for *Outdoor Life* and *Sports Afield.* One must mention here the Machetanz husband-wife, painter-writer team, who have produced a number of highly successful and actually first-rate books such as *The Howl of the Malemute* (Scribner's). Into this category fall also the many producers of juvenile literature, with in fact some exceptionally fine retellings of the native folktales, along with more ordinary stories about life in an Eskimo village or high adventure on the homestead.

There is, secondly, a large printed mass of dedicated reportage by the schoolmarms and missionaries, mostly of their personal experiences. Amateurishly written, its deep sincerity endows it with a high human interest appeal. And, as a kind of on-the-scene report of native village life, it claims significance for the ethnologist and the historian. When we read these "journals," we're reminded of another, earlier Americana; indeed, we're not far at all from 1630 and the *True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captain John Smith.*

A third category comes from amateur verse makers of wide variety, predominantly the folksy balladeers who imitate Service. Chief of these is Bob Klem, who lives in the little village of Palmer and is called "The Low Bush Bard." His "pomes" and those of some others are recited in school assemblies and published in Chamber of Commerce brochures. But much of this verse is printed, if at all, in the Poets' Corner of local newspapers. What is atypical is the vast bulk of it all. One meets "poets" everywhere—not just the usual faculty wives but even the corner garageman and the fisherman ruminate in rhyme. There is also some quantity of a similar homemade, folksy fiction, which gets published occasionally in church periodicals.

Here then in these first three categories—the slick stuff, the parochial reportage, and the homespun songsters and storytellers—here is where Jack London and Robert Service left their influence. All three categories are steeped in vigor and brutality, in physical energy, primitive violence, individualistic struggle. All deal heavily with primal instincts, heroic emotions, and a rowdy love of adventure. Here London and Service created the prototypes. And the "Low Bush Bard" jangles the same simple ballad meters that we know in "Sam Magee."

The fourth category I speak of is documentary journalism—scientific, historical, political—the product of writers who are at once skillful, serious, and significantly informed. Here one finds the carefully recorded and documented memories of "how it was"; all the recollections of the Sourdough Expedition and of major Alaskan personalities like Soapy Smith. One finds bear hunting stories comparable in accuracy and significance and color to the bird reports of the nineteenth century Audubon. Senator Ernest Gruening's books have an unquestioned accuracy and permanency. So, also, do the works which Frank Brink has composed out of tape recorded interviews with the now "old-timers." Brink has happily combined both the scholar's soundness and the artist's flair to turn facts into literature. Probably the leading name in this fourth category is Dr. Charles Keim, Dean of Liberal Arts at the University of Alaska. Dr. Keim has helped greatly to raise the quality of journalistic writing in the state. He has done so not merely as an extremely influential teacher but as an unusually productive writer in the field, himself. Though he has written many articles on Alaska, he is not confined to provincial topics; his biography of Otto Geist, to be published by Knopf, will win the same reception from intelligent readers in New York as it will in Fairbanks.

These first four categories of writing are marked by common qualities which link them to one another and, perhaps, to the native literature as well. First, the very bulk of this writing is very like the bulk of the native folklore; much of it is the uninhibited, sincere, and sometimes naive expression of people who with great facility pour out millions of words. Second, like the native folklore, it is repetitious, imitative, a reworking of the same material: the same celebration of the same snow-capped mountains, the same Eskimos caught on the same ice floes. Thus, third, there is a view of the world which like that in the native folklore is shaped and colored by the local habitat. This writing is marked not only by a provincialism, but some of it, by a downright primitivism. Perhaps we see here some writing with much the same temper and relationship to the general American culture as that which prevailed in the eastern states at the time of Washington Irving.

The fifth category of writing in Alaska is more sophisticated in quality and has a general appeal beyond the regional. A large number of writers regard or aspire to literature as a full-time career. They do produce quality books of poetry and fiction, and these books do get read. Last month it was O. T. Beirne's collection of poems called *Tongue of Wood.* Last year two of our undergraduates brought off successful novels that deal not at all with Alaska: one to be published by Viking Press and the other—Ted Lewellyn's *The Ruthless Gun*—as a first printing for Gold Medal paperback books. Robert O. Bowen of Alaska Methodist University established himself as a ranking novelist with *Weight of the Cross* in 1950. In *Esquire* for July, 1963, L. Rust Hills named him as one of the authors at the "Hot Center" of the American literary scene. What Bowen considers the great future of literature in Alaska can be discerned from his words: "The only real hope for literature anywhere in the United States is in the provinces like Alaska. The cities kill literature in our time."[8]

Literature in Alaska, then, encompasses the oral tradition of the older culture. It includes many different kinds of writing which modern Alaskans seem especially to need—not only for communciation but also for indulging their prospensity for writing—and, finally, the work of a few gifted poets and novelists.

NOTES

1. Viola Garfield and Linn Forest, *The Wolf and The Raven* (Seattle: University of Washing Press, 1948), pp. 12–13.
2. Robert F. Spencer, *The North Alaskan Eskimo: A Study in Ecology and Society*, Smith-

sonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin No. 171 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959), pp. 383–384.

3. *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 26, 1963.
4. Walter J. Arron, "Aspects of the Epic in Eskimo Folklore," *Anthropological Papers of University of Alaska*, V, 2 (May, 1957), 110–141.
5. Edmund S. Carpenter, "Changes in the Sedna Myth Among the Aivilik," *Anthropological Papers of University of Alaska*, III, 2 (May, 1953), 69–73.
6. L. Rust Hills, "Structure of the American Literary Establishments," *Esquire*, LX, 1 (July, 1963), 41–43.

GAUCHO, VAQUERO, AND COWBOY

Harley D. Oberhelman

The cowboy is one of the epic folk figures of the Western hemisphere. From the plains of Canada to the Straits of Magellan, folktales and fiction celebrate his exploits. The following article gives a wide view of cowboy literature as it has developed in North, Central, and South America.

Within the vast reaches of the Americas there are three well-defined expanses of grassy, undulating plains where the entire economy is based on the raising of cattle and the marketing of beef and related products. Beginning in western Canada and stretching through the central plains states of the United States and the semi-arid states of northern Mexico, the first of these three areas terminates in the high central plateau of our southern neighbor with the convergence of the two Sierra Madre mountain ranges. Less extensive and less important economically, the second area begins in central Venezuela and eastern Colombia beyond the peaks of the first ranges of the Andes and finally loses itself in the dense, tangled mass of vegetation that forms the Amazon jungle. The third area, rich enough to vie economically with the North American plains, is the huge River Plate watershed including the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, the entire republic of Uruguay, the Argentine pampa, and a large section of the cold, rugged terrain of Patagonia. Each of these three regions lies at the base of an extensive mountain complex, and in the high marginal valleys a similar economy prevails. In both North America and the River Plate region, the plains extend into the frigid zone where the polar climes make life difficult for both man and beast. The Venezuelan and Colombian plain also terminates in an inhospitable zone made untenable by tropical heat and torrential rain.

In each of these zones the cowherd gradually evolved as a figure of epic proportions whose deeds of valor as well as those of crime have been celebrated in verse and in prose. The *gaucho* of the River Plate, the *vaquero* of Mexico and of the Colombian interior, the *llanero* of the Venezuelan savanna, and the North American *cowboy* all have figured prominently in the literature of their respective countries, yet only in the River Plate region have they been the protagonists of literary masterpieces. Nomadic by nature, they ride through the pages of novels and poems in Spanish, English, and Portuguese chanting their love for liberty and for their faithful horse. Instinctively they follow a code of honor and a sense of obedience to the laws of the open range. Discipline is combined with a feeling of personal valor, and injustices and violations of these laws are swiftly punished. Their skill and dexterity in combat are legendary; the cowboy distinguished himself in the Civil War, and the gaucho formed the backbone of the armies which fought the Portuguese invaders in 1771, helped in 1807 to retake Buenos Aires from the British, and played a valiant role in the battles that resulted in Argentine and Uruguayan independence. Later they were to support the Argentine dictator, Rosas, until his ultimate defeat in 1852. But with the passing of time and the gradual movement of civilization into the open expanses, the cowboy and his Latin counterparts have all but disappeared from the plains to live on in literature, motion pictures, and more recently in television serials.

If one were to judge the many novels and short stories dealing with the North American cowboy on the basis of artistic skill and authenticity, he would discover that relatively few first-rate authors in this country have dedicated themselves to this type of literature. S. Griswold Morley calls Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) the first novel to deal with the cowboy.[1] Other names such as Andy Adams, Will James, Douglas Branch, Agnes Morley Cleaveland, J. Frank Dobie, Zane Grey, and O. Henry follow, but one could hardly imagine a novelist such as Herman Melville or Sinclair Lewis writing a tale of cowboy exploits.

The Mexican *vaquero* has not fared any better; the genre there usually degenerates into novels of banditry. In Venezuela and Colombia the plains region is somewhat removed from the centers of population, and the theme of the *vaquero* or the *llanero* has been relatively unimportant in their national literatures. The classic novel of Venezuela, however, is *Doña Bárbara*, a tale of the plains written by Rómulo Gallegos in 1929. Only in the River Plate region has the genre reached such perfection that it can be considered exemplary of the best in the national literatures. There writers such as José Hernández, Ricardo Güiraldes, and Benito Lynch in Argentina and Javier de Viana, Carlos Reyles, Enrique Amorim in Uruguay have created gaucho masterpieces superior to any published elsewhere in the Americas with the possible exception of *Doña Bárbara*. Morley evaluates the situation in the following manner: "En los Estados Unidos de América se relega al *cowboy* a los basureros de la literatura; en el Uruguay y en la Argentina, los autores de primer rango se enorgullecen de interpretar al gaucho."[2]

The disparity of interest between North and South American novelists evident in their treatment of this genre is not due, it seems, to any inherent inferiority on the part of the former. A plausible explanation can be deduced from certain circumstances of geography and history which forced the gaucho into a center stage position in the River Plate region but left his counterpart standing in the wings in other areas. In both Argentina and Uruguay the pampas form the very heart of the nation, and the two complex urban centers, Buenos Aires and Montevideo, act as depositories for the immense natural wealth of the interior and as seaports for the exportation of the excess wealth which they themselves do not consume. Thus in the nineteenth century the gaucho played a major role in the economy of the region, and in the violent civil wars following independence he followed the provincial *caudillos* into the cities until the defeat of Rosas brought about the disintegration of gaucho society. To have ignored the gaucho in nineteenth century literature would have meant the relegation of a major segment of the population to literary oblivion.

In North America and to a degree in Colombia and Venezuela the frontier lay far removed from the urban centers of civilization. Between the two areas was a significant region of land devoted to diversified farming with a sedentary population. The region inhabited by the cowboy was scarcely known to urban society, and novels dealing with the theme tended to be somewhat romantic, stereotyped "formula" pieces. Morley blames *The Virginian* for leaving an unfortunate plan which subsequent novels were to follow. In almost every case the hero appears in the first page of the novel. His skill and dexterity are without par, and even a cursory comparison of his virtues and abilities with those of the villain demonstrates the obvious inferiority of the latter. A third element is usually a young lady, often a "school ma'am" from the East whose innocence verges on the incredible. The hero, the anti-hero, and the young lady form an eternal triangle, one doomed to extinction near the end of the novel as the villain gets what he deserves at the hands of the hero, who in turn wins the hand of the fair damsel. This rapid action is always punctuated by gun battles, and the reader wonders whether the action might not well be shifted to Chicago or Kansas City, in which case the protagonists would only need a change of wardrobe to convert the whole thing into a "cops and robbers" thriller.

The first serious literary attempt to evaluate the role of the gaucho in Argentine life appeared some fifty-seven years before the publication of *The Virginian*, and it was anything but favorable. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Argentina's great statesman, president, and apologist of romanticism, clearly defined the position of the gaucho in Argentine society and blamed the social and political system of the country for spawning such tyrants as the dictator, Rosas, and the rural *caudillo*, Facundo Quiroga. The nation was also a victim of its vast pampa, a center of barbarism and an extremely poor conductor of civilization. The lack of population in this extensive region gave rise to such gaucho tryants as Rosas and Facundo. Sarmiento's careful portrayal of gaucho types—the guide, the tracker, the singer, and the *gaucho malo*—was probably the first description available to American readers. Sarmiento came to Washington in 1863 for a five-year tenure as ambassador and returned to Buenos Aires in 1868 to assume the presidency of Argentina. During his sojourn in this country he established close ties with Horace Mann, whose wife prepared the first English translation of *Facundo* under the title of *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants, or Civilization and Barbarism* (London, 1868). An extensive correspondence between Sarmiento and Mrs. Mann has been published. During his visit he also met Emerson, Longfellow, Ticknor, and the president of Harvard. In 1868 the University of Michigan granted him an honorary doctorate.[3]

Both Sarmiento and his predecessor, Bartolomé Mitre, believed in a centralized, unitarian form of government, a fact made possible by the defeat of Rosas and his gaucho hordes in the famous Battle of Monte Caseros in 1852. Buenos Aires and Argentina were opened to the "civilizing" influence of Europe, and the once powerful gauchos were all but forgotten. But in 1872 during the presidency of Sarmiento the voice of the poet, José Hernández, a federalist refugee who penned his answer to Sarmiento from his hideaway in the Hotel Argentino in the heart of Buenos Aires, began to lament the fate of the gaucho, who had provided the very foundation for the present greatness of the Argentine republic. The success of his poem, *Martín Fierro,* was instantaneous. Written in the same language and style the gaucho was accustomed to use, it rapidly became the first best seller in the *pulperías* or country stores which dotted the pampa. Wherever the gauchos congregated—in the *pulperías,* in their shacks with mud walls and straw thatch, or around the campfires under the summer sky—the story of Martín Fierro and his comrade Cruz were resung to the accompaniment of the guitar.

I sit me here to sing my song
To the beat of my old guitar;
For the man whose life is a bitter cup,
With a song may yet his heart lift up,
As the lonely bird on the leafless tree,
That sings 'neath the gloaming star.[4]

To escape the injustices of the government, Martín Fierro and Cruz join the Indians on the frontier.

There was a time I knew this land
As the gaucho's own domain;
With children and wife he had joy in life,
And law was kept by the ready knife
Far better than now; alas, no more
That time shall come again.[5]

The first part of the poem, called "The Departure," was printed in fifteen editions with some 60,000 copies during the first seven years after its appearance. Hernández, in an effort to profit from his initial success, published a second part in 1879 entitled "The Return of Martín Fierro." Using the power which the popularity of the first part placed in his hands, he attempted in the second part to present a brief in favor of the gaucho class against the corrupt and distant central government. At the same time he introduced a series of didactic elements addressed to the gauchos themselves in an effort to bring them back from the symbolic frontier of barbarism into the stream of national life.

To work is the law, since the human kind
Must be clothed and housed and fed;
Don't let yourselves fall on evil days,
By lazing around in slip-shod ways,
The heart is sore that from door to door
Has to beg for its daily bread.[6]

The conclusion is a plea directed to the central government and to urban society not to forget the plight set forth in the two divisions of the poem.

> The wretched gaucho's a waif and stray,
> Cast out in the wilds to roam;
> His wrongs never stir a single heart
> To take up the outcast gaucho's part,
> And give him his rights as a citizen,—
> A church, and schools, and a home.[7]

Both sides of the coin appear in the diverse writings of Sarmiento and Hernández. Other writers of the period entered less into the aforementioned polemic but chose to stress the more colorful aspects of gaucho life if they were romantics or to elaborate and catalogue the details of cattle herding if they were realists. Another element, regionalism, serves as a link between the romantics of the middle nineteenth century and the Argentine realists who began to produce shortly before 1900. With the regionalists, a decided taste for local color and an appreciation of landscape and of nature formed the foundation of the later masterpieces written by Benito Lynch and Ricardo Güiraldes.

Lynch, above all a chronicler of the province of Buenos Aires, found his interest in nature often conditioned by his interest in psychological analysis. *Los caranchos de la Florida* (1917), *El inglés de los güesos* (1924), and *El romance de un gaucho* (1930) all mark a break with the more traditional descriptions of José Hernández although his skill with gaucho dialect equals that of the author of *Martín Fierro*. Lynch's great interest was in the man of the pampa, not the romantic or idealized gaucho, but the rancher, the peon, and the cowherd. The scene of his novels is reduced to a study of daily life on the *estancia* with intimate details of activities in such places as the corral, the *pulpería*, and the kitchen.

The masterpiece of River Plate literature, however, is *Don Segundo Sombra* written by Ricardo Güiraldes in 1926. Güiraldes, a great admirer of European impressionism, was successful in transmitting this movement to Argentine letters with his novel in the form of a series of Proustian reminiscences successively throwing light on the image of the gaucho he evokes from the days of his childhood. The novel is not pure invention; Don Segundo Sombra is a literary creation patterned after one Don Segundo Ramírez who lived on the Güiraldes family estate called "La Porteña," located near the town of San Antonio de Areco.

In the novel itself the external action is strictly limited. The hero of the story, a fourteen-year-old adolescent named Fabio Cáceres, has been living a monotonous life until one day an almost mythological figure of a gaucho—more an idea than a human being—passes by chance through his village. Fascinated by his strength and skill, Fabio follows him across the province of Buenos Aires and, in the course of time, learns the art of being a gaucho. In the end, when Fabio unexpectedly inherits an *estancia*, Don Segundo stays on with him a short while but finally disappears over the horizon in a manner similar to his first appearance in the novel.

Aside from narrative and stylistic values, *Don Segundo Sombra* is a collection of visual sensations as Güiraldes makes use of the techniques of impressionism to illumine details of the past. The juxtaposition of light and shadow and of one color with another to form a tenuous image is characteristic of Güiraldes' method. Even the total picture of Don Segundo himself comes slowly into view as the novel begins, only to fade away symbolically as the gaucho rides into the past at the conclusion of the book.

In many ways *Don Segundo Sombra* is an epitaph for the nineteenth century gaucho. The way of life he represents had all but ended on the pampa by the year 1926 when the first edition appeared. One year after the publication of his masterpiece, Güiraldes died in Paris, the Mecca of Latin American literary innovators of the 1920's. His remains were returned to Argentina, and even the president of the republic, Marcelo T. de Alvear, was at Retiro station to witness the beginning of Güiraldes' final journey to San Antonio de Areco. Shortly after three in the afternoon the train reached San Antonio, and an imposing caravan accompanied the body of the author who had immortalized the region. Among those present was Don Segundo Ramírez, prototype of Don Segundo Sombra, whom the newspaper reporters sought to interview at the end of the burial. But Don

Segundo hardly answered them and, turning his horse toward the distant hills, rode away into the shadows.[8]

Across the River Plate the theme of the gaucho has been cultivated by some of Uruguay's best modern and contemporary novelists. Eduardo Acevedo Díaz, Zavala Muniz, Javier de Viana, and Carlos Reyles represent a progression from romanticism through naturalism to a new, modern *criollismo* on the part of Carlos Reyles. An attempt has even been made to link this interest in contemporary cowboy themes with the narratives of Bret Harte which were translated into Spanish in Barcelona about 1863.[9] But it is the work of Uruguay's late novelist, Enrique Amorim, which best summarizes the contemporary viewpoint of gaucho life. Gone are all the colorful trappings of the romantic past as Amorim concentrates on the tragic confrontation between man and nature on one hand and between man and the rural social system on the other. Always seeking what he calls a "dialogue between man and the plains," Amorim feels that the inequitable distribution of land is the basic problem of the River Plate region. A natural consequence of this situation is a feeling of injustice, isolation, and spiritual depravity on the part of his characters. The division of the huge landed estates and the encouragement of European immigration are offered as solutions to the plight of the modern gaucho and to the woes of contemporary rural Uruguay.

Beyond the frontiers of Argentina and Uruguay, the genre has been cultivated extensively only in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil. There the literary development of the gaucho underwent a renaissance after 1910, resulting in a kind of Age of Leather with naturalistic overtones. Such figures as Alcides Maia, Simoes Lopes Neto, Ciro Martins, and Erico Verissimo achieved regional and, in some cases, national prominence with the novels and short stories of the cowboy of the south, almost a foreigner to the masses of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

It would be a mistake to attempt to prove the existence of currents of literary influence between North American and Latin American exponents of cowboy literature, yet there are certain coincidences which must be mentioned. The art and technique of cowpunching is strictly Spanish, having entered our Southwest from Mexico. Certain customs and sports practiced by the American cowboy are indigenous to Spain and were passed from there to the New World. The lacing game in which a rider at full speed attempts to pass a stick through a loop was a Moorish sport also practiced by the River Plate gaucho. The curious method known as straddling by which the cowboy extinguished fires on the plains was also used during the ninetenth century on the pampa. After killing a young steer, the cowboy would tie its feet together with a rope and pull its body along the fire line. In the Argentine the same method was employed, but the gaucho usually used a mare instead of a steer for the operation.

Such tasks as branding, breaking wild horses, and organizing a rodeo are described in a similar manner by novelists and short story writers throughout the Americas. The various arms used are essentially the same except for the gaucho's favorite weapon, the *boleadoras*, which never were used beyond the River Plate region where the gaucho picked up the ingenious invention from the Indians.

It must be remembered that the gaucho existed some one hundred years before the American cowboy and that, as Sarmiento pointed out, he first occupied a marginal position in rural society. First a dealer in contraband or an army deserter, the gaucho gradually returned to civilization. The cowboy, on the other hand, was a member of a respected profession from the beginning, who occasionally fell into the habits of banditry. Music played a greater role in the life of a gaucho since he was always ready to improvise at a moment's notice were another gaucho to challenge him to a *payada* or musical debate. Women command very little attention in gaucho literature.

In the area of vocabulary it is quite apparent that the cowboy borrowed a great number of words directly from Spanish or with only slight phonetic alerations. Such examples as *corral, rodeo, lasso, bronco, buckaroo, mustang, cinch, pinto,* and *stampede* are sufficient to indicate the linguistic debt the cowboy owes to Spanish.

It is in the area of language that many American authors of cowboy literature have been severely criticized. Writing in the *Saturday Reveiw of Literature,* Hurst Julian, himself a cowboy, accuses the authors of most of our western literature of knowing nothing about their subject, of misusing western terms, of employing "down-east Yankee colloquialisms," and of creating improbable or impossible plot situations.[10] While the same criticisms could sometimes be leveled at certain Latin American writers of gaucho and vaquero literature, one could certainly never accuse such figures as Sarmiento, Hernández, Güiraldes, and Carlos Reyles of being unfamiliar with their subject matter. It is perhaps for this reason alone that their prose and poetry is considered today as representative of the best in *belles lettres* which the River Plate region has produced.

Thus it is a multitude of circumstances which converge to make the cowboy and gaucho appealing figures in the Americas. Their heroic deeds against formidable odds presented by man and nature make good reading matter.[11] The hardships of life on the frontier provide them a chance to display admirable fortitude, endurance, and self-denial. Their isolation on the vast grazing lands makes them uniquely lonely and solitary figures. These elements when artistically woven together form legendary accounts which make the cowboy a regional symbol of courage and self-reliance on the North American plains and the gaucho a national symbol of heroic individualism in the River Plate republics.

NOTES

1. *Revista Iberoamericana*, VII, 14 (February 1944), 259.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
3. Pedro Henríquez-Ureña, *Literary Currents in Hispanic America* (Cambridge, 1949; New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), pp. 251–252.
4. Walter Owen (trans.), *The Gaucho Martin Fierro* (New York, 1936), p. 1.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
7. *Ibid.*
8. See José R. Liberal, *Don Segundo Sombra de Ricardo Güiraldes* (Buenos Aires, 1946), p. 19.
9. See "Bret Harte y el criollismo americano," *Atenea*, XXX–XXXXII, (1935).
10. "The Real Fiction in Western Stories," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXII, 12 (July 13, 1940), 13–14.
11. See Frank Goodwyn, "Gauchos, Charros and Cowboys," *Inter-American Review of Bibliography*, III, 2 (May/August 1953), 146–149.

THE AUSTRALIAN LITERARY AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PATRICK WHITE'S *VOSS*

Maurice D. Schmaier

This thoughtful review of Patrick White's VOSS presents an Australian novelist moving to a new interpretation of the heroic man in terms of the history and geography of his new country. The explorer-leader, Voss, encompasses the Australian continent in his experience and achieves his religious and spiritual victories on its broad expanses and with its varied peoples. This novel, published in 1957, suggests that Australia is taking a new look at its destiny and that a new chapter in its literature has begun.

Ever since its aggressively nationalistic period of the 1890's, Australian fiction, for the most part, has been outback or bush in its themes, negative in its approach to Australia's highly urbanized life, realistic in its treatment of the natural environment, and proletarian and stereotyped in its choice of characters.[1] Patrick White's *Voss*, in two of these respects, is no exception.[2] In its fictional treatment of German explorer Ludwig Leichardt's ill-fated attempt to cross the Australian continent in 1848, White's novel must be classified within the dominant Australian tradition of outback-oriented writing.[3] And in its explicit and implicit comparisons of the false values of materialistic Sydney with the true and original values to be found inland, *Voss* falls under the heading of another indigenous literary tradition—a tradition of ignoring city life entirely or rendering it as drab, mean, and unegalitarian.[4] However, if in two respects White's novel is traditional, in two other respects it is not. First, perhaps more so than any of White's other novels, *Voss* is free of Australian fiction's direct, vigorous, but rather unimaginative and formless realism, and instead it makes use of a highly patterned symbolism.[5] And, second, based partly upon White's awareness of the genuine heroes in Australia's past, *Voss* does not share Australian fiction's exaltation of the swagman, the selector, the digger, and other stereotyped representations of the native-born common man;[6] instead it employs an age-old ritualistic and mythic pattern to elevate an uncommon and foreign-born explorer to the same Homeric level as the great individual heroes found in the literature of other lands.[7] In this paper I will deal at length with *Voss*'s essential pattern, but first I will briefly discuss the novel's symbolism.

II

The major symbolism in *Voss* is Christian, embodied within a tripartite pattern and rendered in a somewhat obvious manner. As a Christlike hero, the German explorer Voss passes symbolically through three stages: ". . . God into Man. Man. And Man returning into God" (p. 411). In the first stage, Voss is so conscious of his divinity that his men regard him as their saviour and he looks upon them as disciples (pp. 41–42). It is in this initial stage of his symbolic journey that he meets Laura Trevelyan, the book's other major character, over her "tray of wine and biscuits" (p. 14); and it is shortly thereafter that Voss and his men depart from Sydney, a place where beauty is "passionless" and where "no one would be crucified . . . " (p. 100).

Voss departs from Sydney as a god with disciples, but the deeper he journeys into what is symbolically the country of the human mind, the more he loses his divinity and becomes a man. At the edge of the arid "red centre" of Australia, Voss still is godlike enough to claim that all of his men "sooner or later sensed his divinity and became dependent upon him" (p. 188). Furthermore, even later, he still regards himself as divine enough to assert that he will be "reserved for further struggles, to wrestle with rocks, to bleed if necessary, [and] to ascend" (p. 23). However, Voss's short-lived but sudden illness (pp. 225–227), the illness of one of his men (pp. 286–288), Laura's letter praising humility (p. 256), and his discovery that one of his men sensitively has perceived the true nature and ultimate fate of his quest (pp. 313, 315–317)—all these factors serve to humanize Voss. And consequently, even though he is able to assert when the blacks capture him that it is impossible for him to die (p. 389), soon thereafter Voss manages to learn well enough "the gestures of humility" (p. 389) and to answer a disciple's plea for salvation by saying that he is no longer a saviour and Lord (p. 390).

With the realization that "it is only human sacrifice that will convince man that he is not God" (p. 394; cf. pp. 390–391), Voss develops a trust in God, a humble compassion for the sufferings of all mankind, and a prayer-inspired desire to meet death with the strength and resignation that befit a man. Resigned and strong, he does meet death. As a result, his aboriginal murderer (p. 448), the other blacks, Laura Trevelyan, and even the shallow-minded Sydney populace, all resurrect him as a god. Laura does so, for instance, during his passion, when she compares his sufferings with Christ's and speaks of Voss's impending ascent (pp. 410–411; cf. pp. 477–478). Twenty years later, moreover, Judd, the just-rescued lone survivor of Voss's expedition, reveals that the blacks have come to regard Voss as an eternal spirit of the country (pp. 477–478; cf. p. 413); and perhaps because the people of Sydney unwittingly believe Judd's evangelistic account of how Voss washed his men's sores, sat up with the men when they were sick, cleaned up "their filth with his own hands," and later died from an aboriginal spear thrust into his side (pp. 472–473), they accept Voss outwardly as a Christlike figure and honor him "with garlands of rarest newspaper prose," a bronze statue, and other expressions of their conventional piety (pp. 468–469).

III

Much more important than *Voss*'s tripartite pattern of Christian symbolism, however, is its underlying tripartite structural pattern of the rites of passage. Revealing what Ernst Cassirer has called "the original cultural significance of mythic materials," *Voss* is actually not a novel at all but a romance, which uses a primitive and unconscious pattern of experience to show how a creative hero such as Voss can influence people to restore primal values to a society which has degenerated to honoring the secular gods of materialism and easy living.[8] This pattern is the one first delineated for ritual by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep[9] and delineated more recently for myth by the critic Joseph Campbell.[10]

In essential agreement with van Gennep and Campbell's pattern, the tripartite pattern of *Voss* is one of separation, initiation, and return.[11] Much like the great heroes of ancient and primitive myths, and similar to the neophytes who participate in rituals which employ such myths as pseudohistorical justifications for their existence, Johann Ulrich Voss makes a three part journey across the difficult thresholds of his conscious and unconscious life. On purely a surface level, this journey involves a departure from "the world of common day"—represented by Voss's departure from Colonial Sydney; a deep penetration "into a region of supernatural wonder"—represented by the blood red soil, treacherous gullies, and mysterious natives of Central Australia; and, finally, "a life-enhancing return" after death—as represented by Judd's fervent account of Voss's journey and, more specifically, by Laura Trevelyan's public expression of the lessons in humility, love, and courage which Voss had learned. On a deeper level, of course, Voss's journey is the age-old descent into the human psyche, in which the questing hero ultimately reaches the center of his own existence, regains there the fundamental values which had been lost by his "normal waking consciousness," and then returns to the world of conscious experience so that "less adventurous men and women" can at least share imperfectly the self-knowledge which he has gained.[12]

In its specific details, Voss's rites of passage are strikingly similar to those delineated for the great mythic heroes by Joseph Campbell. Just as these heroes depart, for instance, from a world which suffers from some sort of actual and/or symbolical deficiency, so does Voss depart from the spiritually disintegrated world of Colonial Sydney.[13] Mid-nineteenth century Sydney, that is, is described as a stupified, stultified place where people conduct their affairs with smug self-sufficiency (p. 12), huddle in heavy stone houses to protect themselves from a land they dislike (pp. 13, 33), jingle their money ostentatiously (p. 19), and long to experience the envy of others (p. 119). Sydney is presented, moreover, as a place where people have so completely eaten themselves "into a stupor" of beef and mutton that discussions of nonmaterialistic matters have become difficult for them (p. 44). Thus, as her protest against continuing a discussion of Voss's personality, one Sydney resident voices the opinion that life becomes dull "when people cease to talk about *things*" (p. 112); a resident who disagrees with this pronouncement, unfortunately, is able "to chew beef more happily than words" (p. 112); and, though wondering what kind of man Voss really is, most Sydney residents "prefer to cast him [someday] in bronze [rather] than to investigate his soul, because all dark things made them uneasy" (p. 117).

As also true of the mythic heroes discussed by Campbell, Voss has a postdeparture encounter with protective figures whose function, according to Campbell, is always to reassure the hero that "protective power" is available not only with "the unfamiliar features of the [new] world" he is soon to enter but also within the sanctuary of his own heart.[14] Voss's protective figures are a prosperous grazier and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Sanderson. At their beautiful station, the Sandersons reveal themselves as intelligent, introspective, and humble people with a kindly interest in their guests' welfare. In contrast with their countrymen in Sydney, they are avid readers and deep thinkers (p. 135); they are fastened "forever to their land by the strong habits of everyday life that they had formed upon it" (p. 144); and these habits have so unburdened them of class consciousness that even emancipated convicts are their welcome and frequent guests (pp. 143–144). In the days spent in "the healing air" of the Sandersons' station, "the amiable Mr. Sanderson" and his wife manage almost entirely to cure Voss and his men of antagonisms toward each other and of misgivings about the future which had developed among them (pp. 148–150). Thus, Voss becomes somewhat more capable of kind relationships with his men (pp. 150–151); the men begin to accept their leader's commands as "perfectly reasonable" (p. 150); Voss gains enough confidence, moreover, to send a marriage proposal to Laura Trevelyan (pp. 163–164); and when the expedition finally gets underway again, the next stage of its journey is "a period of great happiness" for Voss, "and, in consequence, [one] of unexplained happiness" for all of Voss's men (p. 165). Happiness is the dominant mood; yet it starts to fade as the expedition gets farther away from the Sandersons' protective influences and closer to what Campbell describes as the mythic threshold beyond which are "darkness, the unknown, and danger."[15]

The threshold which Campbell says the mythic hero must cross is represented in *Voss* by Brendan Boyle's station at Jildra. Much as the thresholds in ancient and primitive myths, Jildra Station is just beyond the outlying regions of previous and thorough exploration.[16] Similar, moreover, to the ambiguous beings who guard such thresholds, Boyle is capable of instilling fear in the travellers who enter his domain but capable also of treating such travellers beneficently.[17] However, Voss and his men see the negative side of Boyle's character first. Their sight of his "warped skeleton" of a home (p. 180); the savagely bent silverware and likewise mutilated books within it (p. 178); and the many evidences of Boyle's admitted compulsion "to explore the depths" of his "own repulsive nature" (p. 179; cf. pp. 184–186)—these sights are all precursors of the later and somewhat more explicit revelation that Boyle is the threshold guardian and Jildra is the threshold. In Boyle's own words to Voss, this revelation is embodied within the warning that

> every man has his own obsession. Yours would be, it seems, to overcome distance, but in much the same way, [a distance] of deeper layers, of irresistible disaster. I can guarantee, [then,] that you will be given every opportunity of indulging yourself

> to the west of here. In stones and thorns. Why, anyone who is disposed can celebrate a high old Mass, I do promise with the skull of a blackfeller and his own blood, in Central Australia. (pp. 179–180)

But Boyle is an investor in the expedition; and, therefore, he does provide Voss and his men with the bare esesntials of hospitality as well as with native guides for the uncharted journey that lies ahead (pp. 179, 181). Yet, if these actions reveal what Campbell labels as the threshold guardian's protective aspect, they also illustrate "the ambiguities" that Campbell says "every hero must encounter" the moment he "steps an inch outside" the boundaries of his own tradition.[18] Thus, for instance, although Boyle openly advises both aboriginal guides to serve the expedition faithfully, immediately thereafter he laughs perversely and whispers something to the natives "in a few phrases of their own tongue" (p. 182). If it is impossible to determine what Boyle tells them, it is still possible to speculate that his words are a portent of one native's later failure to carry a letter for Voss back to Jildra (pp. 229–235) and the other native's ultimate involuntary role as Voss's murderer (pp. 418–419). On one possible level of interpretation, Boyle, indeed, may be Voss's secret enemy; yet since the hero must die before he can be reborn, on the same level Boyle also may be Voss's unknown ally. Even by this very ambiguity, however, Boyle becomes more true than ever before to his role as the threshold guardian.

So much for the departure stage of Voss's tripartite journey. In the initiation stage which now begins, Voss and his men cross the threshold into the world of the unknown. For the mythic heroes discussed by Campbell, this crossing "is a form of self-annihilation,"—an annihilation, however, which leads to rebirth.[19] Similarly, for Voss it is the first major effort to annihilate his own inflated pride; an annihilation which Voss must accomplish if he is to become a true saviour rather than remain a self-appointed one; a life-redeeming annihilation which is foreshadowed as the expedition moves forward "in a tunnel of red light and bowed grass" and "with a surge of sacrificial animals and dedicated men" (p. 201).

Once across the threshold separating consciousness from unconsciousness and secular from religious life, the mythic heroes described by Campbell journey across a "dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms," a landscape on which the heroes "must survive a succession of trials."[20] Likewise, Voss leads his men across a phantasmagoric landscape on which "strange natives" appear, "their shadows first," and then vanish into "those same shadows which had accompanied their approach" (p. 204). The ground now is "humped and hateful," devoid of vegetation, and so "seared" by the sun that its "spent and crumbly" surface is "treacherous" to ride upon (p. 224). The expedition's cattle begin to vanish at night; the thirsty, starving sheep and horses begin to die in their tracks; and Voss suddenly becomes so ill that he temporarily must relinquish command.

The trials undergone by Voss have essentially the same purposes as the trials experienced by the mythic heroes described by Campbell. Their purposes are to strengthen the heroes' endurance; to teach the heroes to humbly bow or submit to conditions which in ordinary life would be intolerable; and, in these ways, to prepare the heroes for their final ordeal.[21] In order to help prepare them, the heroes in the myths discussed by Campbell receive inspiration, directly or indirectly, from a woman who, to them, "represents the totality of what can be known"—a totality which includes a reincarnation of "the bliss that once was known," and even tasted, during their infancy.[22] In a mystically telepathic manner, Voss receives such inspiration from Laura Trevelyan.

The inspiration that Voss receives is culminated in what Campbell describes as "a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World."[23] Much like her counterparts in mythology,[24] Laura Trevelyan becomes so convinced of her hero's ability to complete the annihilation of his ego that she begins to consider him as "her husband" (p. 242). The moment at which Voss first senses this is uncertain; however, the effect of her acceptance of his proposal is that he becomes conscious enough of her mystically telepathic presence better to heed her desire that he continue to humanize himself. As Patrick White expresses this, "Laura had prevailed upon [Voss] to the extent that he [now] had taken human form, at least temporarily. Like the now satisfied earth [upon which there had at last fallen some rain], he was at last enjoying the rewards of wedlock" (p. 277).

As also true of many of the mythic heroes discussed by Campbell, Voss undergoes a final ordeal which involves his abandonment of all remaining attachments to his ego and his subsequent atonement with God, his hitherto rejected father.[25] The ordeal begins after Voss and his two remaining men ride down "the terrible basalt stairs" that lead to "the uncompromising desert," the fiery heat, and the painted black "devils" of an outback Australian hell (pp. 382–401). When the natives finally make the three explorers their prisoners, Voss at first will not admit that the natives can harm him. However, after he has learned what it is like to lose blood; to spend days without food and water; and to observe the deaths of the men he had come to love (pp. 389–390, 400–408, 412–415), Voss at last, "reduced to the bones of manhood," humbly beseeches God for salvation (p. 415). As if in answer to this request, Voss has a dream that promises rebirth (pp. 417–418). And gaining "strength and resignation" from it, he later makes no protest when his renegade native guide starts to decapitate him (pp. 418–419).[26]

Perhaps because Voss is the fictional counterpart of an actual nineteenth century Australian hero, the third and final stage of his rites of passage corresponds only figuratively to the miraculous life-redeeming return from the dead of many of the mythological heroes discussed by Campbell. As the residents of nineteenth century Colonial Sydney are unable to comprehend the mystically telepathic communciation between Voss and Laura Trevelyan, they can hardly be expected to have an actual encounter with the spirit of the dead explorer. For this reason, Voss returns to Sydney only symbolically. The purpose of his symbolic return corresponds essentially, however, to the purpose of the ultimate return of the heroes in many of the world's great myths.

In the myths discussed by Campbell, the heroes often return to the world of consciousness and common day in order to teach others about the fundamental values which they, too, can regain.[27] In Patrick White's *Voss,* however, it is Laura Trevelyan who teaches this lesson. At a party the night of Sydney's pompous unveiling of Voss's statue, Laura herself returns to society after twenty years of asceticism. Though most of the guests regard her as "an insignificant failure" (p. 436) and a "foolish nun" (p. 430), a few "individuals, of great longing but little daring," soon begin "to approach [her] by degrees" (p. 474). Most of these individuals are young native-born Australians, but some are immigrants from Britain and Europe. Having turned an initial hatred into some sort of love for the country, all of them embody the possibility of a national awakening. As Laura herself declares, some of them will be explorers—explorers like Voss who also will learn that "true knowledge only comes of [a symbolic] death by torture in the country of the mind" (p. 475). Some others will be Australian artists, musicians, and writers who someday will express what the "others have experienced by living" (p. 475). And many of them, thus, will explore the Australian environment deeply and creatively, and thereby fulfill the inspired belief of one of Laura's audience that "the inherent mediocrity" of the Australian people "is not a final and irrevocable state . . ." (p. 476).

IV

For Australian society today, the most important message in Patrick White's *Voss* is that genuine heroes are needed who will lead the Australian people across the thresholds that continue to separate their materialistic urban culture from the fundamental way of life that a courageous few have developed in the arid and torrid inland. Australians today, for the most part, remain a timid herd of secondhand Britons huddled together in poor replicas of British cities along the seacoasts.[28] They remain a people preoccupied with material comfort, with sun-worshipping on city beaches, with food and drink, and with trivial conversation. As Patrick White himself has stated, Australia's cities and suburbs are places

> in which the mind is the least of possessions, in which the rich man is the important man, in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is, in which beautiful . . . girls stare at life through blind eyes, in which . . .

> the buttocks of cars grow hourly glassier, food means cake and steak, muscles prevail, and the march of material ugliness does not raise a quiver . . . .[29]

There are indications, however, that Australians in the outback have developed an approach to life which is much different from anything that exists in the urban areas. Tiny South Australian outback communities such as Copley, Oodnadatta, and Algebuckina, have, as Christopher Ralling says, a "unique atmosphere of loneliness and freedom" which has much to do with the outback Australian's development of a deep concern with man's "own relationship with fate"; his eagerness to help others unobtrusively (like the Sandersons in *Voss*); and his code of honesty "with stronger moral obligations than any policeman could enforce. . . ."[30] These values, rather than the superficial ones of Australia's urban cities, someday could hold great appeal for at least some of the approximately 600,000 non-British European immigrants who have come to Australia since the Second World War.[31] Although they have yet to discover it, these New Australians are the audience Patrick White is most eager to reach.

As their religious affiliations are predominantly Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox, they would certainly appreciate *Voss*'s symbolism. And as they have been frequent victims of native-born Australian intolerance, these New Australians would also appreciate the fact that *Voss*'s major character is a heroic foreign-born explorer.[32] Indeed, if they will but perceive and then accept the heroic role that Patrick White has offered them, *Voss* will fufill its author's greatest hope. This hope is embodied in White's own comment that in any kind of artistic communication in Australia, "There is [always] the possibility that one may be helping to people a barely inhabited country with a race possessed of understanding."[33]

NOTES

1. Formative influences were the short stories of Henry Lawson, Barbara Baynton, and ''Price Warung,'' as well as the novels of Joseph Furphy and Steele Rudd. The traditions these writers started have been carried on by many others including Eleanor Dark, Frank Dalby Davison, Miles Franklin, Gavin Casey, Vance Palmer, and Katherine Susannah Prichard. For bibliographical references, see E. Morris Miller and Frederick T. Macartney's *Australian Literature: A Bibliography to 1938, Extended to 1950* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956). For pertinent background discussions, see Vance Palmer's *The Legend of the Nineties* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1954); A. A. Phillips' *The Australian Tradition: Studies in a Colonial Culture* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1958); and Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1958).
2. Patrick White, *Voss* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957). All page references to *Voss* will be given in parentheses within the text.
3. At the age of twenty-seven, Leichardt in 1841 came from his native Prussia to Australia. In 1844–45, he led an exploratory expedition from the Darling Downs in Queensland to Port Essingham, Arnhem Land, a distance of almost three thousand miles. In 1846–47 and again in 1848, he made unsuccessful attempts to cross Australia from East to West, starting both times in Queensland. On the second expedition, Leichardt and his entire party disappeared, somewhere beyond the Roper River in Central Australia. See, e.g., Brian C. Fitzpatrick, *The Australian People, 1788–1945* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1946), p. 193. For a discussion of *Voss's* close indebtedness to the details of Leichardt's life and expeditions, see Marcel Arousseau's ''The Identity of Voss,'' *Meanjin*, XVII (Autumn, 1958), 85–87.
4. Significantly, of the few good Australian novels which deal exclusively with urban life, only one of them—Vance Palmer's *The Swayne Family* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1934)—focuses on life outside of the slums. E.g., compare *The Swayne Family* with Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948); Louis Stone's *Jonah* (London: Methuen, 1911; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1911); and Kylie Tennant's *Foveaux* (London: Gollancz, 1939; Sydney: Sirius, 1946).
5. White's other novels are *Happy Valley* (London: Harrap, 1939); *The Living and the Dead* (London: Routledge, 1941); *The Aunt's Story* (London: Routledge, 1948); *The Tree of Man* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956); and *Riders in the Chariot* (New York: Viking Press, 1961). All of them use symbolism, the stream-of-consciousness, and other modernist techniques; but with the possible exception of *Riders in the*

Chariot they rely more than *Voss* on external observation rather than creative imagination.

6. All such stereoptypes reflect the continued influence of the late nineteenth century "noble bushman" tradition upon Australian literature and life. For recent discussions of this tradition, see Donald C. Gordon, "Australian History and Its Heroes," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, LVIII (Winter, 1959), 1–12; Phillips, *The Australian Tradition*, esp. p. 100; and Russel Ward, "Waltzing Matilda," *Australian Signpost: An Anthology*, ed. T. A. G. Hungerford (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1956), pp. 12–20, esp. pp. 13 and 20.
7. Of the many Australian critics who have discussed *Voss*, only two—Marcel Arousseau and John Thompson—appear to have realized this. In their brief discussions of *Voss*, Arousseau and Thompson state respectively that "White has endowed the Australian imagination with a symbolic figure of heroic proportions applying its whole strength to the task of learning to know Australia"; and, "The Australian Explorer is no longer a kind of Wild West curiosity, but the fountainhead of our Homeric myths, and the basis of our cultural epics." Arousseau, "The Identity of Voss," p. 87; Thompson, "Australia's White Policy," *Australian Letters*, I (April, 1958), 43.
8. Ernest Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), p. 35.
9. Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris, 1909); *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).
10. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949 and 1956). In this paper, the term *myth* is used in a broad sense to designate all traditional hero narratives irrespective of whether or not their overt function is religious (the usual use of *myth*); historical (*legend*); or recreational (*märchen*).
11. *Separation, initiation*, and *return* are the terms used by Campbell. Van Gennep's terms are *separation, transition*, and *incorporation*. Cf. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 30, with van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp. 10–11.
12. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, pp. 25, 30, 35, and 217. The italics are Campbell's. See also p. 321.
13. E.g., Prometheus departs to bring fire to a world which lacks it; Jason sets forth to regain the Golden Fleece; and Jesus departs from a world which needs to regain a true knowledge of Mosaic law. See Campbell, pp. 30, 37, *et passim*.
14. Campbell, pp. 69, 72, *et passim*. Some of the protective figures discussed by Campbell are Spider Woman in North American Indian mythology; Hermes (or Mercury) in classical mythology; and "the helpful crone and fairy godmother" of European *märchen*.
15. Campbell, p. 77.
16. Campbell, p. 81.
17. Campbell, p. 82. Discussed by Campbell are such threshold guardians as the classical god Pan (or Faunus); the Russian water spirit Dyedushka Vodyanoy; and the jungle spirits of the Andaman Islands.
18. Campbell, pp. 82, 83–84.
19. Campbell, p. 91.
20. Campbell, p. 97.
21. Campbell, pp. 97, 109, *et passim*.
22. Campbell, pp. 111, 116.
23. Campbell, p. 109.
24. E.g. the Queen of Tubber Tintye in Irish folktales; Brunhild in the *Niebelungenlied*; and Sleeping Beauty in European *märchen*.
25. See Campbell, pp. 130–131.
26. According to Campbell, p. 148, "For the son who has grown really to know the father, the agonies of the ordeal are readily borne; the world is no longer a vale of tears but a bliss-yielding, perpetual manifestation of the Presence."
27. Campbell, pp. 17, 20, 30, 35–36, 193, 217, 246, *et passim*.
28. The phrase *secondhand Britons* is my own reinterpretation of the phrase *secondhand Europeans* which is used in Professor A. D. Hope's poem, "Australia." Hope's poem expresses much the same philosophy as Patrick White's *Voss*, although it does so in a cynical rather than optimistic manner. See Judith Wright (ed.), *A Book of Australian Verse* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 133–134.

    As of the Australian Census of June 30, 1954, the urban population of Australia amounted to 7,075,269, out of a total population of 8,986,530. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, comp. S. R. Carver, Commonwealth Statistician (Canberra, 1960). See also fn. 31 below.

29. Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son," *Australian Letters*, I (April, 1958), p. 39.
30. E.g., "There is not a policeman within 100 miles of Coober Pedy; nevertheless a [n opal] miner can leave his claim unguarded for weeks and be sure that no one else will 'jump' it." See Christopher Ralling's "Across 'the Invisible Line'," *The Listener*, LXI (June, 1959), 1010–1011.
31. *World Almanac* figure based on a government estimate made in 1962. According to another government estimate made that year, the total Australian population had risen to 10,603,936. See fn. 28 above.
32. Native-born Australian intolerance, actually, is an explicit theme in Patrick White's *Voss*. See, e.g., Voss, pp. 423–424 and 426. For other fictional treatments of it, see T. A. G. Hungerford's *Riverslake* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1953) and Judah Waten's *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954).
33. Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son," p. 40.

CONTEMPORARY DRAMA IN INDIA

Helen Topham

Topham shows a grass roots theater developing in India with plays written in response to the needs of ordinary people. Plays voice the serious thought on social and political matters of the people who attend them. Peasant groups sponsor and attend plays, making the theater in India an especially democratic activity.

In the early years of the twentieth century Indian playwrights discovered the vital part that drama could play in commenting upon and suggesting correction of the economic and social ills of the country. Dramatists, influenced by Ibsen, Shaw, and Galsworthy, interpreted traditional plots taken from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in such a way that audiences would see them as reflections of current life. Such a play was *Keechak Vadha*, written in 1906 by the Marathi playwright Kakasaheb Khadilkar. It retold an episode in the life of the Pandavas, the legendary heroes of the Mahabharata, in such a way that it was considered by audiences as a satire on the Curzon regime. Consequently, the British government banned the play. In 1937, the Indian Congress Party, however, revived it.

The one Indian playwright of modern times to have achieved a worldwide reputation is Rabindranath Tagore, who in a writing career that spanned more than fifty years, from 1881 to 1939, produced more than three dozen dramas ranging from comic farce to the poetic tragedy unique in Bengali literature--and indeed in the entire literature of the East.

In recent years Tagore's literary reputation has had its ups and downs and will probably ultimately rest chiefly on his lyric poetry, which is remarkable for its imagery. The production of his plays at the Tagore centennial in 1961, however, proved that several of them can still delight Western audiences. Among these are *Sacrifice*, a powerful indictment of blood sacrifice and, hence, of war; and the two symbolic plays, *The Post-Office* and *The King of the Dark Chamber*.

Today drama in India is trying to find its place in the rebirth of the arts that has followed the achieving of the country's independence in 1947. It is virtually impossible to learn the exact number of plays being written and published, because as yet no reliable bibliographies exist. However, estimates have been made for various languages and various parts of the country. According to these, approximately sixty playwrights have written nearly 400 plays in Bengali alone in the first fifty-seven years of the century, and about 1,800 plays, including one-acts, were published in Telugu between 1939 and 1953. An estimated annual average of 1,500 to 2,000 plays, including one-acts, radio and television plays, has been suggested as the current output for all India.[1]

The new government has organized three semigovernmental agencies to concentrate their attention on the arts: the Academy of Dance, Drama, and Music; the Academy of Letters; and the Academy of Arts. These organizations have worked towards the promotion of the arts through the setting up of seminars for playwrights, producers, and artists and through the establishing of festivals, such as the annual drama festival in Delhi, which is open to plays written in any Indian language, and the Inter-University Youth Festivals, which bring together college and university productions of drama, music, and dance.

The place of drama in the new India was clearly outlined at one such meeting in

Baroda in 1957, when an All-India Writers' Conference was held on "Drama in Modern India and the Writer's Responsibility in a Rapidly Changing World."[2] In a paper on "Drama in Modern India" delivered at that meeting, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, head of the Department of English at Andhra University, pointed out that all of the important social reform movements of the past century have been reflected in the drama:

> The lecherous old fool, the hunted young widow, the tyrannical mother-in-law, the pride of caste, the blight of poverty, the stupidity of the new educated class, the follies of sophistication, the curse of dowry, the reign of superstition, the persistence of *purdah*, the tangles of polygamy, the scandal of 'widower's houses,' the evils of drink, usury, prostitution, and exploitations of all kinds, the plight of the middle class in view of the spiraling upwards of the cost of living, the disintegration of the family in the old sense—plays have been written about all these and allied topics. More recently, the refugee problem, rationing muddles, cranky control, electioneering gymnastics, and planning heroics have provided additional themes to the satiric dramatist.[3]

Representative of the playwrights described by Mr. Iyengar is Balwant Gargi, one of India's leading Punjabi playwrights, several of whose plays have been translated into English. Born in 1918 in a small Punjab village, Mr. Gargi does most of his writing in Punjabi but is also fluent in Hindusthani and English. His first full-length play, *Loha Kut*, was written for a village audience in 1943. He has since written more than thirty-five one-act and eight full-length plays, numerous short stories and articles for Indian magazines and newspapers, and a book, *Theatre in India*, for which he received the *Sahitya Akademi* award in 1962. Two of his full-length plays, *Kesro* or *The Clay Lamp* and *Kanak di Balli* or *The Mango Tree*, have been successfully produced by the Delhi Art Theatre and other Indian theatre groups and have been translated into English and, in the case of *Kesro*, into Polish, German, Russian, and French.

Kesro was written at the request of a peasant women's dramatic group in a Punjab village where it proved so successful that it was rewritten for the Delhi Arts Theatre where it was first produced on December 14, 1952. The scene is laid in the playwright's own North Indian village, and the characters and plot are drawn from life. The theme, the necessity for education in the villages, gives the dramatist an opportunity to present changing attitudes towards education which must exist wherever reading and writing are being introduced to a largely illiterate population.

Kesro, the heroine, is a young village wife whose husband, Lakka, has been sent to Kashmir on army duty. Because Kerso is illiterate, she must depend upon the few educated people of the village: the schoolteacher, the postman, or the moneylender, to read her husband's letters, a circumstance she bemoans with the words:

> Brother, I get a letter from him every week, but I do not even know the alphabet. I wish I could keep it locked up in a little box and not show it to anyone. But what can I do? I have to share the secret of my heart with strangers.[4]

Determined at last to correct this situation, she attempts to arouse the interest of other women in going to school with her, but their responses reflect the traditional attitude towards the education of women.

One declares:

> Only those women should read who have no man in the house. If, by God's grace there is, what need to read? I tell you, sister, reading makes women lazy . . . . Only idle folk have time to read. How can we read when we have to cook for a dozen souls, slap cow-dung cakes together, feed and take care of the buffaloes? We have no time for such luxuries!

A second suggests cautiously:

> It's good to know something about the written word—but not too much.

A third agrees:

> A little learning is like swimming in a shallow pool. Easier. But in deep learning one may get drowned.

And a fourth, the trouble-making wife of the moneylender, states bluntly:

> People were happier without reading. Ever since education began, the fields are barren and the bins are empty. This black-faced education!

Kesro, however, persists in her efforts and learns to read and write. Her husband approves at first, since it enables him to receive her messages directly, but after his return home he becomes doubtful of the wisdom of her course and cautions her:

> While lightening my burden be sure not to lighten your head. Too much learning is bad for the stomach. One should read only as much as can be easily swallowed and digested.

Because of his inherent mistrust of education, Lakka believes the scandal spread by the jealous wife of the moneylender, who tells him that Kesro is unfaithful. He turns violently upon her and leaves the village with disgust.

Kesro, although stricken by his desertion, does not falter from the path she has chosen. Having learned to sew, she buys a sewing machine, becomes tailor to the village, and justifies her action with the words:

> He went away. First I thought . . . if my work drives away my man, a curse on education and work! But then I thought—no, I must keep to my path. If I hadn't known how to stitch I'd have been in the streets begging for a crumb of bread.

A year later Lakka returns in disguise, tests Kesro and finds her completely businesslike in refusing the advances of her customers. In the fight that follows his reappearance he is unmasked and in turn exposes the greedy practices of the moneylender and makes him cancel the unjust debts he has held over the head of the illiterate villagers who did not know the terms of the agreements they were signing.

Kesro and Lakka are reunited, his pension arrives, and in traditional style, the curtain is brought down with singing and dancing.

In addition to the central theme of education, a number of the other socioeconomic problems listed by Mr. Iyengar are touched on in *Kesro*. Attitudes towards government control, for example, are shown in the exchange between Kesro and the moneylender who insists:

> It costs two annas to post a letter and two annas to read it. That's the controlled rate.

To this Kesro replies bitterly:

> A curse on this control! Everything is controlled—sugar, oil, flour, cloth. Someday even sneezing and breathing will be controlled!

In another scene Lakka grumbles against government red tape and the slowness of paying soldiers' bonuses and lashes out at corruption and bribery in high places, asking:

> Why should the *siledar* or the *patwari* [local officials] bother about us? We have no money to pay bribes.

Kesro has, to the best of my knowledge, not yet been presented in the United States. Because of the universality of its theme, however, and the strong human appeal of its heroine, it might well prove a popular production for a university theatre.

Kanak di Balli or *The Mango Tree* was also written in Punjabi by Balwant Gargi and first produced by the Delhi Art Theatre in 1959. It has since been produced by amateur theatre groups in the Punjab villages and educational institutions. It received its American premiere at the University of Hawaii on February 22, 1963. It has since been published in the Summer, 1963, issue of *The Literary Review*.

Like *Kesro, Kanak di Balli* is set in a Punjab village and has as its heroine an appealing young woman. Its plot, however, is a more romantic and essentially melodramatic one, centering on a pair of "star-crossed" young lovers, torn apart by family interests and a lack of understanding on the part of their elders.

Taro, an orphan girl living with her maternal uncle Maru, is in love with a young bangle seller, Bachna, but their love is opposed by social conventions, religious beliefs, superstitions, and family obligations. Maru, a drunkard, readily agrees to marry Taro off to the lecherous old landlord Maghar; and Nihali, Bachna's widowed mother, likewise arranges what she considers an advantageous marriage for her son.

The young people struggle futilely, like birds in a net, but cannot free themselves. Taro is forcibly married to the landlord but runs away to Bachna for protection on her wedding night. The lovers are tracked down; Bachna is killed by Maghar's bodyguard, and Taro, in despair, throws herself into a well.

This brief synopsis in no way suggests the strong poetic quality of the play, which readily survives translation and adaptation, chiefly because of the clarity and potency of its system of images, most of which are drawn from nature. The original title, *Kanak di Balli,* means an ear of wheat and in Punjabi immediately establishes the relationship between the heroine and a growing plant, since in that language *balli* signifies not only an ear of wheat but also a young girl. Because this word play, however, is lost in translation, Mr. Gargi substituted the symbol of the mango tree, feeling it would be more meaningful to a Western audience.

And certainly it is the mango tree which dominates the symbolism of the drama. Again and again an analogy is drawn between the tree and the heroine. Within the first few pages it is established that she is the only remaining tangible asset of her drunken uncle. On his first entrance he informs the marriage broker, Taban, that he has sold off and drunk up his entire plot of four hundred trees. To this she replies, with a sidelong glance at the unsuspecting Taro:

> Yes, you have only one tree left out of the whole grove.[5]

Later, as the trap begins to close around the girl, the old forester Naraina, who loves her like a daughter, tries to warn her of her impending fate by inquiring,

> Does the farmer ask permission of the tree before he sells it?

Finally, when the business transaction is completed, the mango tree sold, and Taro married against her will to the landlord, Maru staggers in, brandishing an already empty bottle and cries,

> Where is Taro? . . . I sold my mango tree . . . . . All the mangos went into the landlord's cart . . . . . . Taro! Taro!

Although the mango tree is the central image, other symbols of plants and animals recur. At all times and in all countries the peasant is close to nature. His thoughts and speech are colored by it, and its influence shapes his life for good or evil. Mr. Gargi has made use of this point to give a greater thematic unity to what seems on the surface a rather episodic play. The connected images are essentially the hidden thread along which the bright beads of the action move. Trees, for example, are woven closely into the structure from beginning to end, often with a mystical significance. Treated with reverence and respect, trees supply man with beauty, hope, happiness, and security; wasted and exploited for mean and selfish ends they offer only despair, desolation, and death. Men in their pride and virility are frequently likened to horses and bulls; women in their meekness and frailty are seen as cows, caged birds, and bright bangles that a rough touch will shatter. The village well, a central object in the stage setting, provides water which is the source of both life and death.

The picture of village life provided by *Kanak di Balli* again emphasizes the changing social and economic conditions of India. In their rebellion against the traditional arranged marriage, Taro and Bachna clearly represent the views of youth against age. When the matchmaker says to Taro:

> You're grown up now. How long will you be a worry to your uncle? . . . A girl is another man's treasure. She must be handed over as soon as possible.

she is echoing the age-old rules of marriage. But when Taro replies to Naraina's warning that she will not be consulted as to her husband, her reaction is wholly modern. "Why not?" she asks, a query that would never be voiced in orthodox societies where a girl accepted her parents' choice without demur.

Questions of caste and changing attitudes towards it are seen in the speech of the landlord's wife to the matchmaker:

> Evil days! The priest's son blackens his face with the sweeper's woman. There is no distinction between one caste and another. The big and the small, the high and the low are getting mixed.

Corruption and bribery are touched on in Naraina's description of the fair at which

> The police arrested two wrestlers who were quarrelling. They'll get a fat bribe and let them go. The police arrest common people.

The point is made again when Taban suggests to Maru the action he must take to accomplish anything in the village:

> The rich settle the marriages of their sons and accept money. The headman takes bribes for letting the water flow into the fields. The hunchback judge does not accept money when he settles the fate of a client, but he accepts wenches. The moustache of the inspector or police always glistens with drops of wine. All honest people! Ha! Respected and admired!

These few examples may point the way in which Indian drama is moving. They show that the damatist is aware of changing ideas in a changing society, and the plays' popularity with Indian audiences would seem to indicate that they, too, are receptive to the new ideas.

The greatest problem confronting the playwright and the student of Indian drama is that of language. Since the disappearance of Sanskrit, there is no single language known and used in all parts of the country. Hence, there cannot be a national theatre in the true sense of the word. Dramatists use the language of their own areas, which must be translated for use elsewhere. Amateur theatre groups, long the mainstay of the Indian theatre, are also caught by this dilemma. They turn to translations of European and American plays, or concentrate their efforts on a single language, a circumstance that has resulted in the formation of over forty amateur theatre groups in Delhi alone in recent years. It is obvious that there is no ready-made solution for breaking down this barrier to aesthetic communication.

The Indian government and those actively engaged in working for the theatre realize that the road to world recognition is a long one, but they feel that if the strides made in industry and such branches of theatre as television and motion pictures in the sixteen years of independence may be taken as an indication, a new Golden Age of theatre may yet appear.

NOTES

1. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, *Indian Drama* (Faridabad, India, 1956), p. 9.
2. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (ed.), *Drama in Modern India and The Writer's Responsibility in a Rapidly Changing World* (Bombay, India, 1961), p. 10.
3. Iyenegar, p. 7.
4. All quotations from *Kesro* are from a microfilm copy of the privately printed English translation of the play.
5. All quotations from *Kanak di Balli* are from the acting script used in the University of Hawaii production.

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II. The World Community of English

Philippines
West Indies
South Africa
Nigeria

RUNAWAY CHILD: MODERN PHILIPPINE LITERATURE

Leonard Casper

The new English literature of the Philippines is of special interest to Americans. All the other English literatures of the world are offsprings of British English and the British Commonwealth. Only the Filipino-English literature is the direct result of American English and the American Commonwealth. Leonard Casper finds that their plural and changing culture challenges Philippine writers to an increasing range of literary achievements in the midtwentieth century.

Running away is one of the advanced stages of any normal birth. Throughout the history of the Philippine republic's prolonged labor, the United States has often assisted and encouraged the runaway—sometimes for better; sometimes for worse. In 1935, during the Philippines' preparation for self-determination and self-expression, an Institute of National Language was created in Manila. English had entered the country by accident and had remained chiefly as a practical means of mass education, under monolingual American administrators, but also as a device for linguistic liaison among the scattered island peoples.

Because English as the language of government and education was intended to be no more permanent than American rule itself, the Institute during the Commonwealth years was encouraged in its attempts to contrive a national language which would borrow from all the regional vernaculars. Its core would be Tagalog, which traditionally has been the language of metropolitan Manila and its surrounding provinces. Eventually, this language came to be called Pilipino.

Because so many American teachers died or were dispersed during the Second World War and because postwar anticolonialism in Asia often took violently irrational forms, the eventual disappearance of English in the Philippines was considered a stark possibility. To protect international culture from such a loss, a multiphased, UCLA-directed Language Study Center was established in suburban Manila in 1957. Its purpose was to preserve English at least as a second language in the Philippines. Today, teachers of English are far better trained than teachers of Pilipino. Consequently, English is somewhat closer to being the *de facto* nationwide language in the Philippines.

The future is beyond prophecy; but Philippine periodicals in the 1960's have angrily denounced the present state of Pilipino, a *nationalized* language which now seems far more artificial an imposition on the native tongue than does English. The English of the Philippines, however, is neither American nor British English. To satisfy anticolonial feelings, and to accommodate changes in orthography and accent already intrenched, a new Filipino-English has emerged. This Filipino-English with variations of its own may be encouraged at the academic level, as it already has been encouraged in marketplace and moviehouse and homely *sala*.

If the changes that are occurring in Filipino-English can be described more happily as a living extension than as a loss, so too can it be argued that the appearance that Philippine *literature* is running away is only illusory. The seeming distance from the American norm emanates from the patronizing eye of the American who read Carlos Bulosan's *The Laughter of My Father* in the 1940's and confused the author with the Steinbeck of *Tortilla Flat* or *Cannery Row*; or who published Celso Carunungan's *Like* *a Big Brave Man* in 1960, thinking the author was another Saroyan. Large-scale publication of Philippine fiction in this country has been so selective that one false image emerges almost exclusively—that of the vaudeville hick dressed up with folk humor, and local color.

As a result, the writer with integrity may indeed be tempted to run away, to care less and less for the American mis-reader. There is a stirring in the Philippines, among its publishers. Playwright Bert Florentino has established his Peso Press, to test whether books will flourish if their price is reduced to that of a movie or a meal. The Benipayo brothers have rival presses, one supported by Bookmark, the first authentic Philippine distributor. In the universities, courses in twentieth century Philippine literature have at last begun to reseed themselves. After years of reconnaissance, a little renaissance in the Philippine press may result from the American publishers' indifference. Unfortunately, the enlargement of the world of literature in English will mean little, unless the West can rediscover this country of experience, which is no more a stranger than the West wants it—and itself—to be.

In America today, the South is the region of cultural ferment and challenge, the center of literary renewal that New England was a century ago. The cause of this new eminence is the southern intellectual's struggle to reconcile his conflicting inheritances: atomistic Jeffersonian individualism, modified by those "pieties" natural to clannishness (the extended family) and by Christian humanism expressed as extreme neighborliness, the doctrine of self-determination modified once by the existence of slavery and, more recently, of only gradually diminishing discrimination. The central problem, for example, in Faulkner's world-in-miniature, Yoknapatawpha County, is the erosion of living traditions and forms into abstract conventions.

The Philippines, too, is a place of ferment, of a search for national identity among cultural polarities received from a pluralized past. Thirty million Filipinos are concentrated in relatively few and scattered areas, on islands whose mountain ranges often make direct communication between coasts difficult. In one sense, to be most Filipino is to be regionalistic. This physical separation is reinforced by multiple language barriers. Furthermore, the Philippines historically has been a junction for diverse Malayan, Mediterranean, and American influences. Understandably, therefore, there is in the island culture a uneasy coexistence of pagan and Christian practices and attitudes; of submissive conservatism and of sudden emotional release—the *amok*; of genuine hospitality made widespread through the concept of the extended family, and of subtle kinds of nepotism that undermine human worth and efficiency, a family chain of command which, by investing all authority in the ranks of the elders, gnaws at the flesh of political democracy, and interpersonalism which in extreme forms reduces men to social means.

What provides a nucleus of unity for all the diversities created by Philippine geography and the history of its peoples' origins is the agrarian orientation of Philippine life. The popular impulse towards conservatism is indebted to the rural character of society as much as to centuries of colonialism. Nearly half the gross national product is still agricultural; 80 percent of the population live in small fishing *barrios* or on farms. Above all, the poverty associated with tenant sharecropping as it has long been practiced in the Philippines may well be the source of its chief social structures: communal living, the extended family, nepotism, the intricacies of family seniority.

Responding to such circumstances, the foremost Filipino writers in English have not been cataloguers of abstractions, these past two decades. Often, in their work, there is a slowness of motion which owes something to timeless folkways' sacred, seasonal mysteries; but as much, again, to the questing spirit for quietly profound consequence which is appropriate to an open, developing society. The most exemplary fiction shares a kind of restraint and virile delicacy, a precision by indirection appropriate to the peoples' heritage of courtesy and courtliness, but appropriate also to the inner-turning, patient modern probe for reassurance. The function of imaginative literature, such writers know, is not to take for granted, but to recalculate, to validate one mode of experience by another, and thus to assist the conservative towards an appreciation of what is worth conserving, and the liberal towards a knowledge of what is worth liberating.

Manuel Arguilla's collection of stories, *How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife,* which won the first Commonwealth Literary Award in 1940, demonstrates how the lives of rural *barrio* people can be narrated credibly through the mutual disciplining of romance and realism. Even when he wrote of the cities, later, Arguilla chose as his subject the dream-turned-to-daily-dirtywork of laborers migrant from tenant farms. In 1956, N. V. M. Gonzalez' novel, *A Season of Grace,* went further by establishing, in language properly simple, an analogy between the land laborer and other natural creatures, as they exist in cycles of life-rhythms. The *kaingins,* the burnt-over lands of Mindoro, are no romantic paradise: they are overrun by rats, by petty officials and extortionists, by exploiting landowners. Yet the *kaingins* are not a spiritual wasteland either. The cycle of seasonal change becomes, for the human figures, a spiraling movement towards gradual fulfillment. Doro and his wife Sabel endure their hard lot, sustained by the grace of inner poise: and therefore prevail. Their very ordinariness *proves* human worth and places them beyond pity and even beyond crude social comment. Although they are twentieth century figures, they seem related to those pre-Spanish inhabitants of the Philippines whose social codes of justice and decency made possible their relatively easy conversion to Christianity. In Gonzalez' novel there is none of the oversimplification of average men, to the point of character-evasion, that limits Carunungan's work. And for the latter's broad burlesque, Gonzalez substitutes a subtle folk humor that provides a clue to what keeps submerged, impoverished man from despair.

It is also characteristic of the folk emphasis in Philippine literature that all three novels about the Second World War are novels of guerrilla action and not of metropolitan military occupation. In fact, Juan Laya's *This Barangay* (1950) is less concerned with violent action of *any* kind than with how ancient tribal social structures kept war refugees alive and responsibly organized in their jungle fastnesses.

The two most recent novels (1962) published in Manila—F. Sionil Jose's *The Pretenders* and Kerima Polotan's *The Hand of the Enemy*—both significantly develop the theme of the city's corruption of rural attitudes and values. Polotan's ironic sense, particularly, makes possible revelations beyond mere acknowledgment of the conflict between tradition and modernity, between agrarian and cosmopolitan ways. Implicit in *The Hand of the Enemy* is the realization that corruption by the city's indifference-breeding impersonality is possible only for the corruptible; and that those men are most corruptible who lack self-knowledge and who therefore blame vague, external forces, blame history for what they do to themselves. With the same intent, Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero in three volumes of plays has sharpened irony into near-Aristophanic satire, at times, making the *nouveau riche* expose their inner compromises and failures through their own twisted idioms and gauche gestures.

The painful changeover from *kaingin* to commercial metropolis provides occasion for innumerable reflections on the proportion of loyalty a man will give to self-reliance or to larger allegiances: reflections on what in general might be called nationalism, but what actually involves decisions about a variety of commitments and dispositions and therefore involves the problem of human integrity itself. States rights and Jeffersonian individualism are not dead issues in America or in fiction such as Faulkner's. The Philippine people and their literature are equally concerned with the shifting balance of power between self and society. One extreme can be represented by Jose Garcia Villa's poetry—many times a hymn to absolute self. A solipsistic smallness of vocabulary betrays an essentially nineteenth century romanticism more concerned with self-expression than even self-exploration. The other extreme was urged twenty years ago in the collected essays of S. P. Lopez, *Literature and Society* (he has since left literature to become ambassador to France and, more recently, Foreign Affairs officer in Manila). The "social consciousness" which he required of literature as a premise, not as an experience to be earned, resulted in such abstract manifestoes as Zulueta da Costa's *Like the Molave* (together this book of poems—or of detached rhetoric—and Lopez' collection won Commonwealth Literary Awards in 1940).

Both extremes tend towards abstraction; but, fortunately, most Filipinos cast their minds somewhere between. Within their means—the indirections that imaginative literature necessarily follows—they are concerned with reevaluating the extended family and clan pieties, with respecting the presentness of the past and therefore with measuring what Faulkner would call the "erosion of living traditions into hollow forms."

Apparently this is what Ricaredo Demetillo intends to do with his free adaptation of *Maragtas,* only the first part of which, *Barter in Panay* (1961), is so far available. It is based on an epic folk history and civil code, recorded on bamboo barks when, in 1212, ten noble *datus* fled tyranny in Brunei and established settlements in the Visayas. Closer to the modern Filipino's problem of multiple identity, however, is Alejandrino Hufana's *Sickle Season* (1959), a search for *all* usable pasts. In semi-epic fashion it lets the Filipinos' Malayan ancestors consort with Henry the Navigator, Copernicus, and other godlike adventurers both mythic and historic. What they share is a willingness to voyage to self-discovery, at any hazard; and this theme of the oneness of those who make the honest, arduous search is conveyed through recurring imagery which, like the sickle itself, is an arc in a world-shaped circle, ever in motion. Similarly, in *Poro Point: An Anthology of Lives* (1961) Hufana looks among his Ilocano contemporaries, the most migratory Filipino group, for sustenance to the poet's anticipated high image of himself as heir. But most of the vignettes reveal lives of clamorous desperation. The language is lodged in tight linguistic forms reminiscent of primitive folk riddles: commemorative, sacred indirections, sometimes terrifying. They acknowledge the poet's acceptance of dispossession; of a role as tragic clown.

The imagery of return employed by Hufana has its counterpart in two works by Bienvenido Santos. The stories in *Brother, My Brother* (1960) are based on ironic wisdom: the ambition to be our unique and separate selves drives us away from our birthplace; but to be our whole selves—the entire continuum that is the composite Self—we have to come back, however we can. Our fathers cannot be denied, our brothers cannot go unacknowledged, if we want to achieve our own fullness. Self and society are inseparable, the parable of these stories implies again and again. Santos' earlier collection, *You Lovely People* (1955), presents a variation on this theme through the Philippine expatriates' dream of virtue in another land and another time—the place of their childhood, recalled powerfully, abroad, during World War II. The dream has to be modified by reality, as these expatriates make their pilgrimage home to the physical and spiritual ruins of the postwar Philippines. Yet the protagonist Ben, like Santos himself, had been circulating among the States, lecturing on the irreducible strengths of his fellow countrymen, their virtues of loyalty and courage. It would have been the cream of the jest if some of those strengths had not survived in some Filipinos: and, in fact, the very publication of *You Lovely People* in all its loving honesty is one of the best proofs that courage does endure.

It is the journey motif that sets the structure, also, for N.V.M. Gonzalez' *The Bamboo Dancers* (1959), but this time there is no enlightened pilgrimage and what is visited is the spiritual wasteland within the journeyer himself. The narrative drifts—intentionally—because Ernie Rama, the point-of-view character, is overconcerned with himself; others are expendable. The international scene only measures the distances that exist among self-isolated people. Even Ernie's countrymen and his own father are alien to him. To compensate for the narrator's detachment, the author provides a tissue of symbols warning of what follows irresponsibility. Life is not the bamboo dance, the *tinikling;* life is not a dance of evasive action. Characteristically, Ernie is sick during the story's climax in which accidental death, miscarriage, and murder follow in rapid succession. At the end, Ernie nearly drowns and has a chance to be baptized into human involvement; but he emerges still only self-concerned, like those Japanese in this novel who have erected at Hiroshima a monument not to humanity, nor to self-knowledge, but to self-pity. *The Bamboo Dancers* is as severe an indictment of the pseudointellectual as any of the late nineteenth century works of Jose Rizal.

Perhaps the most distinguished Philippine play, Nick Joaquin's *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* (1952), provides a system of dramatic devices which convey the role of the past—especially of preindustrial Spanish times—as moral memory, as conscience to the present and guide to the future. Offstage, Bitoy, standing in Manila's postwar ruins, commemorates prewar Intramuros; the staged action itself is constantly informed by respect for an earlier era through the invisible portrait by Don Marasigan of Aeneas fleeing burning Troy with his father on his back, with their faces identical. Don Marasigan himself is *paterfamilias* and progenitor of that integrity which for so many other characters has been compromised and conventionalized. These other characters pay only lip service to honor; but not the Marasigan daughters, who are transfigured by their sacrifice of sensual love and of wealth for family unity, who are willing to forget pride, in order to remember self-respect.

In his novel, *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961), Joaquin extends the dimensions of this moral memory to include not just the coexistence of past and present, but the intersection of time and eternity. Everyman's possession of two navels suggests just such dualities—as well as the coincidence of the diabolic and angelic in man. The Filipinos who recall their homeland from self-imposed exile in Hong Kong represent an impulse that includes, at the same time that it is larger than, nationalism. They seem to express a cosmic alienation, a yearning to return to some higher identity. The division of the storytelling among a number of narrators indicates the difficulty of discerning truth from error, right from wrong. Nevertheless, Joaquin's reliance on a variety of mirror images symbolizes the capacity for individuals, out of a sense of responsibility both personal and communal, to progress towards the fullness of truth with one another's help. In the penultimate chapter, a series of progressive flashbacks is interlaced with flashes forward, anticipation of death through the four elements—earth, water, air, and fire, the last becoming a means of purgation. In the final chapter, young innocence-ridden Connie Escobar and old idealistic *revolucionario* Monson, having confronted themselves in one another and having seen how obsessed they both have been with evasion, become committed to life in a way that Ernie Rama, in *The Bamboo Dancers,* perhaps never can be committed. They accept the difference between dream and reality, as any person or nation in search of selfhood must; but they accept furthermore the necessity of both dream and reality, as springs of action.

Gregorio Brillantes, also, uses a rotating point of view in five of the twenty stories in his collection, *The Distance to Andromeda* (1960). As in Faulkner, the device indicates the loss of traditional closeness among Brillantes' middle class urban families. Parents and children share one roof but little else. Consequently, one generation betrays another or fails to provide compassion in the moment of another's need. The sense of separation, of inarticulateness, is substantiated by placement of many of the stories in the shadow of war or in the central characters' tumultuous adolescence. Yet, as N.V.M. Gonzalez points out in his introduction, these stories are constructed around images of "arrivals and departures," of movement through the distances within man, and between men, and between men and the cosmic spirit. Interstellar space is pictured less in terms of empty, impassable distances than in terms of a place where divine love flows towards a rendezvous with the startled pilgrim eye. When the walls of pride fall, rescue is that close; in the meantime there are windows from which to watch. Brillantes' stories are filled with symbolic windows, including a recurring dream of a lost but eternal city. Here is no dream of a dead past, but an authentic intimation of immortality, of the possibilities of regeneration within the shadow of Armageddon. The season of grace is now and here, Brillantes implies.

Such fiction, given the forcefulness of its persuasions, safeguards the Filipino from denying his identity in the very act of seeking its fulfillment. The journalist and the ambitious civil servant sometimes are tempted to define the national experience as if it had occurred outside history. They clamor for a sudden leap—forward?—into automation. But though the city novelist may be just as concerned with freeing the national economy from being a dumping ground for foreign manufactures, he cannot so totally despise an agricultural way of life, but recalls both evils and virtues of the *barrio* of his birth; and without nostalgia he touches again his first and most enduring flesh. That same honest acknowledgment, however painful its aftermath in the necessary reconciliation of apparent opposites, has begun to accommodate pre-Spanish tribesman, Peninsular Christian, Moro rebel, and American do-gooder in an image of common ancestry, with the same ingathering generosity that made a nation out of seven thousand islands. Soon

Philippine fiction will discover that the Philippine-American War, casualties and treachery and all, as well as the brotherly Commonwealth years, now is inseparably part of the history of their people. The same events, with all their implications, belong to the history of the United States. Consequently, the Philippine experience, in large portion, need be only as alien to Americans as Americans choose to be alien to themselves.

Run after the runaway child: it is you.

WEST INDIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Frederic G. Cassidy

West Indian English reflects a culture and has an artistry of its own. Professor Cassidy gives the historical background of the West Indies, some of the prevailing literary themes and some excerpts from West Indian writers which give the distinctive style and tone of literature in the Caribbean archipelago.

Nobody could possibly cover such a topic as West Indian literature in the scope of this paper. Let me therefore begin by limiting it. I shall touch only on the English-speaking parts of the Caribbean, only on writers of this century, and only on a few of the outstanding writers among these. The list of works at the end of this essay gives some impression of the centers of literary activity—Jamaica, Trinidad, British Guiana, and Barbados—and may be some guide for future reading.

It may be helpful to remind you that these islands, or in the case of British Guiana, this enclave on the edge of a continent, had colonial beginnings similar to those of the United States. Columbus stopped three times at Jamaica, and settlements in most of these colonies by English-speaking people were made at about the same time as those in North America. Two of them came into English hands in the seventeenth century (Barbados 1627, Jamaica 1655) and never left them; the other two began to be settled by the English in the late eighteenth century (British Guiana 1796, Trinidad 1797); British Guiana had been Dutch before, Trinidad French and Spanish before.

None the less, the language of England, as in the early North American colonies, remained for a long time that of literature—in other words, writing was done either by visiting or transplanted Englishmen, or by born colonials following as closely as they could the English patterns or models, though they might set their scene in the West Indian home. Any serious writer who hoped to be attended to sought his audience in England and expected to be judged by English standards. This is the normal colonial situation.

In our century, however, and especially in the past thirty years, it has become more and more evident that the colonial era is at an end. The West Indies are following a now well-worn track, but without the violent rupture of revolution through which the United States was born. Canada has achieved a more gradual maturity and self-determination, and within the past very few years the British West Indies also have moved toward self-government. The hope, ten years ago, that there might be a Federation of the West Indies, though that was formed in 1958 and came to the brink of success, collapsed in the fall of 1961 when a plebiscite in Jamaica took that island, with nearly half of the total population, out of the Federation. Trinidad followed, and those two islands have since set themselves up as nations—tiny ones trying to go it alone under the protective wings and the financial and technical aid of Britain and the United States. This left Barbados and some of the Windward Islands as remnants of a Federation, and British Guiana separate—as it always was, for it has held itself warily aside from federation, deciding to "wait and see." The sociopolitical scene, then, which has been the milieu of West Indian writers for the past quarter-century has been an atmosphere of colonies beginning to feel their maturity and developing the desire for self-government. This naturally furnishes a dominant theme in their literature, to which I shall return.

The plantation system of the West Indian sugar colonies is parallel rather to that of the southeastern United States than of the north. To establish and work these colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, landowners resorted to slavery and brought Negroes in from West Africa by the hundreds of thousands from the latter seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. The abolitionist movement in England led at last to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1834, by which slaves were paid for per capita to their owners and were set free. While there was powerful resistance to this and emancipation was not achieved without great bitterness, it was at least achieved by lawful means and without producing the cataclysm of civil war. The freed slaves, when there was land enough, settled in the same kind of haphazard way as did the squatters on the American frontier, invoking the simple law of possession. As a substitute for slave labor, the sugar planters tried to recruit European whites—who, however, generally refused; Chinese—who could not stand the climate; and East Indians, who came on contract with the option of returning to India or staying in the West Indies when their contract time was worked out. Ever since the eighteenth century, the whites have numbered no more than 5 percent of the population in any of the colonies except Barbados. Today the population is largely Negro or colored in Jamaica and Barbados, and divided about equally between Negroes and East Indians in British Guiana and Trinidad. There are also sizable numbers of Chinese. In the present century all the races—white, Negro, Indian, and Chinese—have begun to mix in all possible permutations and combinations. It is obvious that the question of race, racial competitions of various sorts, and the place of race in emergent states, must furnish a second important theme for writers.

The English, while preserving their governing position as long as possible, have always recognized the fact of upward social movement among the populace in the West Indian colonies. Both through normal commercial means and education, the more able non-English have for generations been taking their place in the general life of these islands. While color bars and the consciousness of color are by no means lacking in social life, they have not been official in most places for many years, and such restrictions as lingered have been reduced nearly to the vanishing point. Among professionals—doctors, lawyers, churchmen, teachers, artists—there are now more colored people than whites, and if anything the latter are at a disadvantage. More and more, these colonies have shown themselves both eager and able to take the responsibility of their culture and their government upon their own shoulders. This sense of coming of age, which includes both exhilaration and uncertainty, reflects itself in the literature of the new generation. It is not easy to grow up, to get a firm sense of one's identity, to learn to express that self in an artistically fruitful way.

One more matter, the purely economic struggle of the laborer to establish himself in a stable life above the mere subsistence level must be mentioned briefly. When the slaves were emancipated, they sought at first no more than the opportunity to live their lives in freedom. Many took to the uncultivated lands and lived a simple village-settlement life. In this century, however, with the near saturation of population and the rush to cities, conditions have deteriorated seriously. The "affluent society" means very little in poor agricultural areas or those producing only raw products. Overcrowded cities have meant disease, crime, social breakdown. The rise of labor movements has given power to help decide how the pie should be cut, without the ability to prevent it from continually shrinking as the hungry numbers increase. In a word, poverty has become a great problem and has led to the reverse migration, in the past eight years or so, of tens of thousands of West Indians—shout out by quotas from the United States and other places—to Great Britain, where they have formed the new ghettos of London, Birmingham, Manchester, and other industrial towns, looking for the job—or the unemployment check from the welfare state—which they could not get in the West Indies. In these few years a sudden spate of books and articles has come out, written by West Indians about their uprooted fellows in Britain; and this, basically an economic problem but with its very serious social repercussions, has become a theme in West Indian literature.

So far I have said very little about language, but this too must be considered. British English has been, and despite some American influence continues to be, the language of government and education. Those at the top of the scale achieve Standard English certainly as well as their counterparts in the English shires. They form, however, a very small group; the mass of the population in all these places speak 'creole' English with local variations—a speech which the later comers, East Indians and Chinese, have adopted from the Negro descendants of the slaves among whom it was developed in the first place.

By 'creole' speech we mean the 'first' or only language of a populace, an idiom which has been developed from a blending of languages. West Indian creole languages are blended chiefly from European and African tongues; French creole as in Haiti and Martinique, Portuguese-Spanish creole as in Curacao, English creole as in Surinam and the British West Indian colonies with which we are concerned. Creole languages are understood to have developed out of 'pidgin' speech, which itself is a rudimentary and purely auxiliary form of communication among people who have real languages of their own. In the seventeenth century, Englishmen in ships trading along the coast with West Africans ashore developed together a kind of pidgin English (probably with some elements borrowed from Portuguese pidgin). Brought over to the West Indian colonies with the slaves, this pidgin English formed the basis of a new idiom which developed rapidly, utilizing some features from the African languages and many from English. As the Africans forgot their native tongues, their children were left with the new blended idiom as their only language, which they developed to suit their new environment—so the creole languages came into existence. But it should be understood that creole, in contrast to pidgin speech, is in every case a real and complete language with a structure of its own, a fully functioning idiom adequate to the requirements of those who speak it.

For obvious reasons, the European languages associated with the creoles have retained the prestige, and at least in the English-speaking areas there is no serious likelihood that the creole language will ever become official. While it will remain the intimate speech of the populace—that in which they live, that in which they think and feel—English still attaches them to the larger world outside, and English is the language of every kind of social advancement. The West Indies, therefore, are virtually bilingual, with English officially at the top of the scale, and creole very solidly established in a variety of forms the rest of the way down.

For the writer this situation obviously poses a problem—one, by the way, which is not unexampled in history. It took centuries for the vernaculars of northwestern Europe to emerge from the dominant prestige of Latin, to attain their maturity as languages to which a literary genius was willing to trust his fame. The problem faced Dante at the end of the thirteenth century; in England it faced Chaucer at the end of the fourteenth. In a similar sense, the West Indian writer today who wants to express the individuality of his country and his people, to enter into their lives and problems, and to depict them realistically, cannot ignore the creole speech. Yet if he takes it exactly as it is, he assumes a heavy burden of prejudice. His audience, the educated local people, look down on it. Those on the rise socially associate it with poverty and ignorance, especially if they have not safely escaped from its ancestral hold on their own lives. Traditionally, also, it has been used chiefly for humor, and derisive humor. There is the definite fear that to look on it with sympathy will lead to the degradation of "good English"—that is, the English of England.

A few authors have taken their chances with this attitude. In Jamaica, Claude McKay sought to be a sort of Robert Burns, using the creole speech as Burns used Scots, and writing two volumes of poems in some of which he achieves some such position. But without the genius of Burns, and without a close parallel between the Jamaican peasant and the Scottish cotter, McKay remained unknown outside his native island until he moved to Harlem and began writing novels. In the best of these he depicted the Jamaican rural scene in the spirit of Thomas Hardy. But since he showed no revolt against things as they were, he is somewhat neglected by the present generation.

Two other ways of dealing with the creole speech are practiced. The usual one is to keep strictly within quotation marks. The other is practiced by one Jamaican writer, Victor Reid, who has a strong poetic strain in all his prose: he invents an idiom of his own, based on the creole—taking out of it, and heightening, the most expressive features as he senses them. For one who knows the creole, this invented idiom is as new as it is for the outsider—it is altogether Reid's. At first it merely appears startling, but it grows on one, and since Reid *does* have a true poetic eye and ear one finds it ultimately successful. But it is not creole.

For that matter, except in frankly dialectal verse and stories, usually humorous, there is hardly any attempt to represent the creole speech as it really is. To do so would be to make the literature virtually unintelligible outside the West Indies. The writer must perforce use Standard English, and even when he uses the creole in representing speech he must tidy it up, using it in a form not too distant from that of the Standard English which has always dominated it. It must also be used sparingly as a sort of condiment to the tale told in what is, for the educated West Indian, his language too—that of England. Yet the creole speech is not necessarily a debased speech. On the contrary, it has the capacity of being used with dignity; it can express all the force of the emotions when used with simplicity and sincerity; and it holds latent much natural poetry, as some of its best users have repeatedly proved, and again I name the two Jamaicans, Claude McKay and Victor Reid.

In the rest of my paper I have included short selections illustrative of the various types or themes I have described. First is a short portrait, altogether in the European tradition, of which the only thing West Indian is the character depicted in his milieu. This is from H. G. DeLisser's *Susan Proudleigh,* a portrait of the heroine's father:

> Her father saw her wrath and trembled; then immediately cast about in his mind for some work of consolation that might appease his daughter. He was a tall, thin man, light brown in complexion, and possessed of that inability to arrive at positive decisions which is sometimes described as a judicial frame of mind. He was mildly fond of strong liquors; yet even when under their influence he managed to maintain a degree of mental uncertitude, a sort of intellectual sitting on the fence, which caused his friends to believe that his mental capacity was distinctly above the average. By these friends he was called Schoolmaster, and he wore the title with dignity. By way of living up to it he usually took three minutes to say what another person would have said in one. That is to say, he delighted in almost endless circumlocution.
>
> It was even related of Mr. Proudleigh, that, one night, no lamp having yet been lit, he surreptitiously seized hold of a bottle he found on a table and took a large sip from it, thinking the liquor it contained was rum. It happened to be kerosene oil; but such was his self-control that, instead of breaking into strong language as most other men would have done, he muttered that the mistake was very regrettable, and was merely sad and depressed during the remainder of the evening. Such a man, it is clear, was not likely to allow his feelings to triumph over his judgment, though upon occasion, and when it suited his interests, he was ready to agree with the stronger party in any argument.

The attempt to understand oneself, to grasp the roots of one's present being, always involves the backward turning through history. The British Guianese, Edgar Mittelholzer, has written two historical novels, *Children of Kaywana* and its sequel *Hubertus,* studies of the establishment of Dutch colonies along the Corentyne and Essequibo Rivers from the seventeenth century forward. Kaywana is the daughter of an English sailor and an Arawak Indian woman. Her children by two Dutchmen remain as the colony grows, one branch mixing with Negro slaves and, after two generations, with the other branch. The fortunes of the family are followed for seven generations as it produces every kind of character, strong and weak, good and evil, normal and abnormal. Attacks by Indians, by privateers, and eventually a great slave rebellion, along with the gradual growth of the colony, furnish the substance. Mittelholzer is relatively objective, though he spares no kind of violence, and these novels have considerable sweep and force.

In the following excerpt, August, the small son of Kaywana, sees Negroes for the first time when a boatload of slaves arrives from Africa:

> August came into the house one morning in a tremor of excitement. He wanted to know about the ships in the river. 'Whose ships are those, Mynheer? They have a strange look. Are they Spanish?'
>
> 'No, they're ours,' said Adriansen. 'They're from Africa. Now that the truce with Spain is at an end, the Netherlands Government has granted a charter to the West India Company. Those ships have brought slaves from the Guinea Coast.'
>
> 'Slaves? What sort of people are they, Mynheer? Like the Indians?'

> 'No. They are black people.'
>
> 'Black people! I never knew there were black people.'
>
> 'Would you like to see them at close quarters?'
>
> 'Yes, Mynheer, I should. I've never seen a black man.'
>
> 'Very well. We'll all go.'
>
> The skiff held them with ease. While Adriansen plied the oar, August watched over the two-year-old Willem to see that he did not scramble overboard and swim back to shore, for that was his favorite trick when he was being taken anywhere in the boat. He could swim like a tadpole. Kaywana sat cuddling the new baby, another boy, born two months ago and called Aert. That was not the only day they saw the black men. There were many other days when they stood and watched them sweating in the fields. Black bodies with muscles that rippled. Close-cropped kinky-haired heads—heads bent with the apathy of enslavement. The sun beat on them, and sometimes rain came and dribbled on their tough shapes. Men of Africa, thick-lipped and thick-skulled. They looked oft-times like beasts out there, toiling in the noon. But when you looked closer you were startled, for you could glimpse the flame of humanity like magnificent lightning in their blood-shot eyes.

Among the children of Kaywana, who, when she hated, killed, there are violent matriarchal types, the most terrific of whom is Hendrickje. At one point, out of revenge against her daughter, who has shot her, Hendrickje sends her four grandchildren off to kill their mother. The children, who have been taught to run wild in the jungle, enter on the expedition with relish, and succeed.

One other novel of Mittelholzer's deserves mention, *The Life and Death of Sylvia.* For this the time is the present century. Sylvia is the mulatto daughter of an Englishman, drawn between his well-off upper class set and a sort of beatnik crew of young outcasts, leftist intellectuals, who fascinate her. At her father's sudden death she finds herself abandoned and ultimately falls to prostitution. The unusual thing in this novel is the close-up study of race relations within a mixed colored society, where the lighter browns and the darker browns are intensely conscious of pigmentation, and problems are not so simple as mere black and white.

The other historical novel which I shall mention is Victor Reid's *New Day.* This is the account of an uprising which took place some thirty years after Emancipation in Jamaica—the conditions that led up to it, the unnecessarily harsh measures by which the Governor put it down. Whereas Mittelholzer saw his uprising from the point of view of the planters, Reid sees this through a brown family, the father being headman on a sugar estate, a tough, Bible-reading patriarch, and his son Davie, who is attracted to the rebellious side. The story is told, using the Huckleberry Finn device, by the younger brother, who both admires the father and loves his older brother. It is Reid, you will remember, who has invented his own idiom. Here is his picture of the family:

> This Sunday morning, day-cloud has no' peeped, but my Father is calling:
>
> "Manuel O! Davie! Ruthie! Get up and come all o' you, prayer-meeting time."
>
> There is straw a-rustle and yawns from the other rooms. From my kitty-up in the same room as Father and Mother, I hear when Davie grumbles something. You always know when Davie grumbles something 'cause everybody giggle. Everybody 'cept Manuel.
>
> Pa John and Ma Tamah heard it too, for in the young light o' dawn, I saw him stiffen and look at Mother.
>
> "You hear that boy, Tamah? Hear him?"
>
> Then me fearful for Davie, for my father is vexed. My father leaps from his bed and rushes to where the trace-leather hangs back of the door, but Mother is quick after him and is holding to his arm. She whispered and whispered to my father until deep breath pushed anger from him.
>
> Some of the worry-marks left my mother's face. She called:
>
> "Hurry all o' you pickneys—your father is a-wait!"
>
> Then me, less fearful but more sorry, for nice it is and yet not nice when somebody else is getting the whip. Davie must ha' heard when Father went for the trace-leather, for now he is first into the hall and on his knees looking like overgrown lambkin.
>
> All o' us are in the hall on our knees now, Emmanuel, David, Ruth, Samuel,

> Ezekiel, Naomi, and me, Johnny. Father struck a lucifer-match for the lantern, raised the shade, and put flame to the wick. Young light swelled quickly to manhood, and Father puffed out the match. All of us watch as light flows down Father's face. Blue eyes which bed deep down in his head looks one time on Davie and then on all o' us.
>
> Anger-marks are still on Father's brown forehead. Funny thing, but when Father is vexed he looks more like white man than brown. When he is at peace, there is softness in my Father's face.
>
> Ruthie says it is because Scotchmen are always warring and brown people are always singing, so that when Father is vexed he looks like his Scottish sire, and when at peace like his mother who had brown blood in her. Must be true it.
>
> Father rested the lantern on the table and opened the Book. But no words came from him, and Mother looks on his forehead and sees there are still anger-marks there. So then, feel, I feel her arms hug my shoulder and same time she begins *Sweet Hour of Prayer.*
>
> In the long metre she sings the hymn, and all o' us take it up with her, 'cept Davie and my father. But after Father listened a little he raised his head and looked at Davie—eh, quick my bro' Davie commenced a-sing too. Bye-and-bye, Father came in at the second verse. Then we came to the end.
>
> Through a chink over the door which Mother always covers when the Christmas wind is northing, day-cloud is peeping now at me. Down in the Bay, the sea is kneeling for early matins. There is the whisper and the roar of the chant when groundswells creep out and then come in like thunder. I am thinking say the spray must be near up to the barrack this morning and I wish say the prayer meeting was over. Is nice, it, to have spray on your face and you with nothing on, rolling on the sand.
>
> A good light is on the Book now. Father says he is reading from the Book o' Isaiah. I do no' hear much though, for I am watching Davie. I love Davie.
>
> I saw when Sammy touched him with his shoulder. When Davie looked up from under his brow, my bro' Sammy shook his head as if to say: *Do not make Father more vexed.* I know that Sammy loves Davie too, so when Davie's and my eyes make four, I shake my head too.
>
> But I am eight, while Sammy is fifteen and Davie is nineteen, so Davie forms his mouth like saying *Shut up*, and I see Naomi grin. Naomi is ten. I want to rub sea-sand in her hair but Father is reading from the Book.
>
> FOR THOSE THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD SHALL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH.
> THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES. THEY SHALL RUN AND NOT
> BE WEARY, THEY SHALL WALK AND NOT FAINT.
> There is iron and heavy wind in my father's throat.

This novel, worth reading for its evocative qualities and fine poetic handling, is propaganda in the best sense; it had a definite function in heartening the movement toward self-rule.

George Lamming's recent novel of growing up in Barbados is particularly interesting because the dawning awareness is not only that of a boy achieving manhood but of a Negro recognizing what it is to be black in a society run by whites. There is a light nostalgia in this book as we see social changes coming ineluctably to the boy's native village. A rising labor movement brings riots and disturbance. The older people of the village who have led lives of honest poverty are among the saddest victims of change. Here is a scene in which the village shoemaker has just been told that the land has been bought out from under his shop, and he must move. Two friends try to console him.

> The overseer's brother didn't say much. Bob's father asked him whether he had any stories about the land, but he said no. He hadn't seen his brother for many weeks except when he went to pay the rent. They sat silent feeling for something to say, and suddenly they couldn't believe what they saw. The shoemaker was crying. The tears fell in large drops down his face and on to his shirt. The overseers's brother took his hand away and looked at Bob's father. They closed the door and drew nearer the shoemaker. They didn't know what to say and they didn't want to make him feel worse by saying the wrong thing. The shoemaker sobbed loudly as the men sat around wondering what they should do. He bent and took up the boot which he placed upon his knee. The men moved back a little and looked around for something to occupy them. The shoemaker punched the hole

> through the sole and made a stitch. Then tears fell on his hand and down the leather. The light came through the window showing his face bright black with the thin lines the water made on the cheeks. Occasionally he passed the sleeve across his face.
>
> " 'Tisn't a day if it ain't twenty years," he said, not taking his bowed head from the boot. "An' to tell me that I got to move. Note that I notice what he says, but the thought of it. 'Tis the thought of it that hurt me." He raised his head when he spoke the last sentence. The men nodded but didn't speak.
>
> "Twenty years," the shoemaker said. "It ain't as if it wus twenty days. 'Tis twenty years I wus here in this said same shop not to count the years my parents live on the same spot. My ol' Ma—God rest her in her grave—always beg if nothin' else to pay my rent so that I'd be comfortable in mind, an' I hear an' do as she say, for twenty years I do no less. Every God-send week, I walk up there through the wood an' pay that rent an' receive my receipt, an' to tell me that a stranger who I ain't know no more 'bout than the man in the moon, to tell me he could come to tell me to get off here in three weeks. Where in the name of peace would I put the ol' shop? Who going move it? What would I pay to move it with, an' even if I could where I goin' at my age with this shop? Not that I notice what he say, but 'tis the thought of the whole thing that hurt my heart. 'Tis the mere thought of it."
>
> "Don't worry yuh head," Bob's father said. "We by yuh side always."
>
> They opened the doors and looked out at the cross-roads where the people were moving to and fro between the shops.
>
> "I got to go," the overseer's brother said.
>
> "An' don't you bother yuh brain 'bout anythin'," Bob's father said. "What good for one good for all, an' if you sink we all have to sink with you."
>
> They stepped across the canal and walked away together, and the shoemaker turned to make another stitch in the sole, mumbling to himself, "Not that I notice what he say, but 'tis the thought of it, the mere thought of it that hurt my heart."

The last selection is from *The Lonely Londoners*, by Samuel Selvon, a Trinidadian of East Indian family. Here is a scene between a malaprop Trinidadian nicknamed Big City and his friend Moses:

> The week Big City get this car he meet in a accident with a number fortynine bus and he had was to go to court. He went around by Moses moaning, with a lot of forms he had to full up. Big City always confuse when he have forms to full up, and in the old Brit'n it have bags of that to do. . . . So to avoid contention with the wife he does always go round by Moses whenever he have forms to full up.
>
> "How this accident happen?" Moses ask.
>
> "Boy, them ————ing bus drivers can't drive, I was going slow down by Gloucestershire road—"
>
> "You mean Gloucester Road."
>
> "Stop ————ing me up, man, I tell you Gloucestershire Road. And same time this bus fly round the corner—"
>
> Moses help Big City to full up the forms.
>
> Another thing, he like to go in for football pool, but up to now he don't know how to full up the forms properly, and every week he round by Moses.
>
> "Boy, the day I win that £75,000, oh lord! It would be hell in London city, boy. You know I nearly had them last week? I was only one draw out—you sure you marking the nought in the right place?"
>
> "Man Big City," Moses say, "is time you learn to full up the coupon for yourself, you know. It not hard. Let me show you."
>
> But Big City went on as if Moses didn't speak. "Blackpool playing Aston Villan this week," he say, "that is a sure draw. What you think of Arsenal?"
>
> "Listen," Moses say, "I tired telling you, I don't believe that football pool is for me. If I ever get money is by the sweat of the brow, and not through winning anything."
>
> "You making joke, Moses! Last week two fellars win £75,000. Why you don't take a chance? Is only a tanner a week I does invest. Why you don't join the Littlewoods Happy Circle of Investigators? Look it have a place there where you can put your name and address on the coupon, and they will start sending you forms."
>
> "Big City," Moses say again, tired out with helping full the form week after

> week, "make a effort to learn, boy. You see where it mark eight selections? You have to make a nought in eight places. You can't go wrong even if you try. Right in the spaces here."
>
> But Big City enter the pools every week and never full up a form himself yet. He try Littlewoods for two months, then he give it up and switch to Shermans. After that he went to Hills, then Vernon, then Cope, then he went back to Littlewoods.
>
> "Never mind boy," he tell Moses, "one day I will win that £75,000 and then you know what?"
>
> "No, what?"
>
> "Big city, boy, big city. Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Rome, Bagdan, then after the States, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, then after one of them yacht to sail in the Mediteran. And women? Women for so! Where all those bigshots does go? On the River, in Italy."
>
> "And what about the car you have now, you wll give it to your good friend Moses who full up the form for you, or when you have all that money you forget your friends?"
>
> "No boy. You know what I will do? I would like to have money, and buy out a whole street of house, and give it to the boys and say: 'Here, look place to live.' And I would put a notice on all the boards: 'Keep the Water Coloured, No Rooms for Whites'."
>
> "But Big City, you only have mouth, man. I sure if you win all that money you head straight back for Trinidad to eat a breadfruit and saltfish and go to Maracas Bay to bathe in the sea."
>
> "Who, me? No boy. I not saying I mightn't go back. Come to think of it, is a good idea to go back like a lord and let all them bitches see how much money I have. But wherever I roam, I will land back in the old Brit'n. Nine-ten years I live here now, and I get to like the place." . . .
>
> But after City leave him Moses used to think 'bout that money, how it would solve all the problems in the world. He used to see all his years in London pile up one on top of the other, and he getting no place in a hurry, and the years going by, and the thought make him frighten sometimes.

These brief selections from half a dozen books give you no more than a glimpse, though, I hope, one that invites a further look into West Indian English literature. I close with some words from C. S. Lewis:

> If there is any safe generalization in literary history it is this: that the desire for a certain kind of product does not necessarily beget the power to produce it, while it does tend to beget the illusion that it has been produced.

I think West Indian writers would accept this statement in the right spirit, for they know they have not yet done their best. Yet much of what they have done is very good, and certainly, it seems to me, worth the attention of the world outside the Caribbean.

TWENTIETH CENTURY WEST INDIAN AUTHORS

JAMAICA:

Herbert G. DeLisser, *Susan Proudleigh*

Claude McKay,
- *Home to Harlem*
- *Banjo*
- *Banana Bottom* (1933)
- *A Long Way from Home* (1937)

Victor Reid,
- *New Day* (1949)
- *The Leopard* (1958)

John Hearne,
- *Voices Under the Window* (1955)
- *The Eye of the Storm* (1957) (*The Faces of Love*)

Roger Mais,
Brother Man **(c1957)**

BRITISH GUIANA:

Edgar Mittelholzer,
A Morning in Trinidad **(1950) (*—at the Office*)**
Shadows Move Among Them **(1951)**
The Weather in Middenshot **(1952)**
Children of Kaywana **(1952)**
The Life and Death of Sylvia **(1953)**
Hubertus **(1954) (*The Harrowing of —*) (1955)**
My Bones and My Flute **(1955)**

E. R. Braithwaite, *To Sir with Love* (1959)

BARADOS:

George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953)

TRINIDAD:

Samuel Selvon,
A Brighter Sun **(1952)**
An Island Is a World **(1954)**
The Lonely Londoners **(1956)**

(The list above is minimal. For a full bibliography of West Indian literature, consult the forthcoming *Bibliography of British Commonwealth and Colonial Literature*, to be published in 1964, by Prof. Joseph J. Jones, Department of English, University of Texas.)

ALAN PATON AND SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

Lucile Clifton

Africa begins a new era in its history. The African will take his place on the world stage in this century as the American did in the last. As Mark Twain and Henry James shaped the American image, so their South African counterparts, Alan Paton and Ezekiel Mphahlele, are now shaping the African image. Where writers of the Renaissance used Latin to appeal to the world's literate audience, African writers now use English to make the world hear. And the world is listening. As our own poet, Paul Vesey, says, the world is looking to Africa for "a new humanism, new psychic ways, and a vital force." Lucile Clifton notes how the writers of South Africa are united with the West African both by their use of symbol and by their choice of themes.

Sixteen years ago in San Francisco, Alan Paton finished the book which was to make him famous in the Western world and to direct its eyes toward the country so soon to dramatize the basic moral problem of our time. *Cry, the Beloved Country,* upon its publication in 1948, received immediate acceptance and very soon found its way into the English classroom. Its appeal lay in the theme that, although the tribe was broken, a new order could be built by cooperation, understanding, and love. At a time when civilization itself was threatened by a worldwide war and a world-destroying weapon, teachers welcomed the note of hope, the possibility of recovery and continuation. Although Paton used a story of his homeland, little known to his American readers, he wove the materials into a familiar and particularly timely pattern, the sacrifice of the son for the salvation of the future. The language seemed to combine a primitive simplicity with a Biblical beauty. It was difficult to evaluate the book as a work of art in the midst of the emotional response. It may yet be too soon.

Although the materials are completely South African, they are woven into symbolic patterns familiar in Western literature. The journey to Jo'burg, the city of gold, is a contemporary pilgrimage. The African father, Reverend Kumalo, must painfully follow the steps of this journey, the steps of fear, to find his son, Absalom, only to reach the greatest fear, the loss of his son. Such fear can end only in complete destruction or new understanding. Because the white counterpart, James Jarvis, takes the same pilgrimage to the same point, the two must meet. It is this point in time at which the parts of the world, once separated, are brought together by a single tragic act. In Paton's novel, understanding results.

As well as the timelessness of the plot there is the timelessness of the land, the beloved country, for which the African peoples share a mystical response. Paton uses the symbols of the high place and the valley, the country and the city, symbols common to the journey of man in our era. The city is the symbol of evil and trial (Pretoria) where the journey may end, as it did for Absalom, in destruction. Members of the central family group in the story have the same relationship Westeners have found usual in literature since the *Odyssey:* the father, the faithful wife, and the son in whom all hope rests. The journey, though broken off (at Vanity Fair) in one generation, can be reestablished in the next. The patterns of culture, broken by Kumalo's brother John and sister Gertrude, are destroyed for them, but they can be reestablished by the grandchildren who survive. The church represented by Reverend Msimangu and Father Vincent, and the law represented by Mr. Carmichael and the Reformatory man are the stabilizing forces. The very government which has destroyed Absalom sends the agriculture demonstrator to help bring the dead valley back to life.

When reduced to generalizations, the story seems either obvious or too pat, too innocent or sentimental, but read as one man's story against the hopeless odds of a changing society, it still contains a gripping terror, the particular terror of our times. It is probably as close to tragedy as we can get.

In spite of its success, the book has met with widely differing evaluations. It is praised for demonstrating the power of the humility and love, love without hate, which seemed to substantiate the Christian faith. It is condemned for stressing the childlike quality and innocence of such faith in the contemporary world. It is criticized for losing its art for a thesis, but recommended by the same judges for its sincerity. Kumalo is admired as an immemorial figure and complained of as a groveling slave, or idealized puppet. Peter Abrahams, an African writer, stated in his *Return to Goli* that "only Alan Paton, out of great compassionate love, had got beyond scratching at the surface of the black skin."[1] On the other hand, Ezekiel Mphahlele, a schoolday friend of Abrahams, in *The African Image* scorns the characters as unreal, groaning "under the load of the author's monumental sermon." For some the language has a sweet simplicity; to others it is heavy and contrived. These critics do not disagree on the meaning of the text; it is about the aesthetic value that they quarrel.

Paton's second novel in 1953, *Too Late the Phalarope,* was received less enthusiastically. This difference was partly because of the tremendous reception of his first book, but to many the subject was offensive and the Biblical form less appealing. In spite of some judgments that the subject of sexual relations between races is no longer a moral issue, miscegenation, as Faulkner saw, is less accepted in our Western society than murder, although here at least we punish it less violently. Since the book dealt with guilt and fear in the white man instead of in the black man where they are considered to belong, the story was less understood and the impact was less than that of the first novel.

Paton's last book in 1961, *Tales from a Troubled Land,* contains ten touching but less hopeful stories of African difficulties. Many of the stories deal compassionately with young Africans caught in a society in which they have been given no place. Sometimes the reformer lessens the artistry by such words as these in the splendid little story, "Death of a Tsotsi,"

> And this death would go on too, for nothing less than the reform of a society would bring it to an end. It was the menace of the socially frustrated, strangers, to mercy, striking like adders for the dark reasons of ancient minds, at any who crossed their paths.[2]

When Paton's novel appeared, so little was known of South African literature that the story seemed to have sprung full-formed from its creator's mind. Perhaps the names of Schreiner, Fitzpatrick, and Millin were known to American readers, but most Americans had little knowledge of the development of racial ideas in South African literature. Although the earlier literature concerned with racial matters is not large, the ideas have as long a history in Africa as in America. In the nineteenth century the same humanitarian interest which aroused the slavery dispute in our country saw the African native as an exploited human being. Another kind of romanticism saw the African merely as a picturesque part of the setting. The same sense of religious superiority which we manifested toward the American Indians the white missionary manifested toward the African natives. Another response, however, which is distinctively African and not peculiar to the nineteenth century, dating back to Greek and Roman times, is that Africans will destroy the white man.

In the 1920's when Americans were viewing their culture as a wasteland, the value of Western civilization in terms of race relations was being questioned by the white man in South Africa. William Plomer in *Turbott Wolfe* and his friend Van der Post in his writing felt the appeal of the black community. At this time the poet, Roy

Campbell, and William Plomer tried editing a magazine, *Voorslag,* to which Van der Post contributed, but they so frightened their sponsors by criticizing the color bar that the venture was discontinued. Mrs. Sarah Gertrude Millin, whose *God's Stepchildren* became a best seller in the United States, more nearly expressed the feelings of both countries by looking upon the mixture of races as a degenerating force.

A romantic view of the valorous white pioneer is perhaps most characteristic of South African writings before Paton's books. Pauline Smith, in her stories of the little Karroo, celebrates the sturdiness of the pioneer farm family. In *Turning Wheels,* Cloete glorifies the conquering of the land by the Afrikaners.

In the fifteen years since Paton's success, American audiences have become acquainted with at least four times as many South African literary works as they had been before. Plomer, Millin, Cloete, and Van der Post continued their writing. Peter Abrahams, the first African writer to attract attention outside the continent, began writing in the forties, but he was virtually unknown until after the publication of Paton's novel and after Abrahams himself was living in England. New young writers such as Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, and Dan Jacobson became known to magazine readers, and South African names such as Mopeli-Paulus and Mphahlele appeared on library shelves.

During this period the most dangerous of subjects and the most fascinating since the Immorality Act prohibiting interracial sexual relations is the interracial marriage or affair, the subject of Paton's second novel. The Afrikaner's inflexible attitude toward the subject was reflected by Mrs. Millin's early book, *God's Stepchildren,* and reiterated in her *King of the Bastards* in 1948. In Plomer's early book, 1925, *Turbott Wolfe,* the African girl pities her white suitor because she *belongs* to her community. By midcentury such temerity would not be permitted. One of Peter Abraham's books, *The Path of Thunder,* is about racial violence caused by the interest in a white girl shown by an educated young African upon his return to his native village as a school teacher. The opening section of *A Wreath for Udomo* is concerned with interracial affairs in London before the hero takes himself off to political duties. Jacobson's latest novel, *Evidence of Love,* is the story of an interracial marriage. These stories raise antagonism in other places as well as in South Africa.

Favorite among South African materials has been the Great Trek, the covered wagon journey into the interior very like our movement west although in many ways more dangerous. The bravery and strength of the Afrikaner pioneers is admired and has been chronicled on all sides. Stuart Cloete won his reputation by his interpretation in *The Turning Wheels,* while Peter Abrahams depicted the resisting forces in his book *Wild Conquest.* Recently perhaps because of the growing tension in government between the Nationalists and the Liberals, the Boer War has been the subject of new books such as Rayne Kruger's *Good-bye Dolly Gray,* considered to combine scholarship and dash, and Stuart Cloete's *Rags of Glory,* just off the press, a novel drawn against the huge background of the war. Colorful historical figures, both black and white, share the romancing: Kruger, Rhodes, and Lobengula, the last king of the Matabele, in Cloete's *Against These Three*; Rhodes in Millin's biography; and the great Zulu leader portrayed in Mofolo's *Chaka.*

The isolation in the South African geographical remoteness seems to have called forth a good deal of autobiographical material. Two in particular by exiled Africans, Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* and Ezekiel Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue,* are excellent sources for an understanding of the childhood of the African. William Plomer's *Double Lives* pictures the transplanted Englishman and Doris Lessing's *In Pursuit of the English* reverses the process in her move from Southern Rhodesia to England.

The "beloved country" of Paton's first novel was not a new allegiance in South African literature. The land as a constant symbol appears in writings of both African and colonists. The land is for them a savage land—not as Hemingway saw it, whose people are savage rather than the land—a land to be feared and conquered and loved. It is a cruel land in Fitzpatrick's early tales, even in the animal stories for young people. For Roy Campbell, South Africa's only poet to be widely recognized, both admired and despised, the elemental forces of nature—space, color, and heat—furnished the symbols for the sweep of his verse. Van der Post, born of Voortrekker parents into the midst of the haunting land, has been searching for the mystical meaning of this overpowering beauty ever since, particularly in such books as *Venture to the Interior.* The land so throbs within the stories of Stuart Cloete that even the most shallow and contrived plot takes on an intensity and fascination. Even the light romantic novel of Lady Joy Packer, *The Moon by Night,* is filled with the excitement and beauty of the jungle. This land intrigues not only the uninitiated and the curious reader from other countries, but the South African himself. This love of the land, according to Paton, is the meeting point of the four groups of the South African community (Britishers, Boers, Asians, Africans) who otherwise live separately.[8]

Paton's country has been subdued in part by the farmer, but his farms are not to be confused with those in other countries. They stretch out on wide and lonely plains beneath a sky like the "roof of some brazen oven." The South African farms have not changed since Olive Schreiner so wrote of them in *The Story of an African Farm* in 1883. Paton's valley is like those Pauline Smith describes in *The Beadle* (1927) as set in the midst of "many acres of desolate veld, their rocky mountainslopes and their widely scattered lands, green only where water was to be found or water could be led, lay far apart, . . ." In the 1950's Doris Lessing describes the solitude and the harsh red earth, and Dan Jacobson's first two novels show a land "savaged by the sun."

The movement away from these desolate lands to the city began with the discovery of gold. All roads led to Jo'burg or to Goli began long before Paton conceived his story. The pilgrimage itself served some twenty years before as the basis for Plomer's *Ula Masondo* and Van der Post's *In a Province* (recently republished). In the former, Ula surrenders to Johannesburg, and when he must flee, he has been spoiled for the reserves where his relatives live. Van der Post's Kenon, being denied the same justice as the white man, degenerates beyond rehabilitation. As early as the 1920's these writers recognized the changing society, which was breaking the tribal culture beyond repair. And since *Cry, the Beloved Country,* the story has been told again many times. In Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy,* for example, Xuma comes down from the north to Johannesburg to work in the mines, and although he ends up in trouble, he, too, has come to a realization that human beings, not race, matter.

But in *Cry, the Beloved Country* the brother and sister of Paton's Reverend Kumalo remain in the city and have no hope nor desire for regeneration. As Peter Abrahams points out in *Return to Goli,* Paton wrote his book at a time when he assumed that Smuts would remain in power and that the lot of the blacks would continue to improve. In 1948, what Paton desired was to accelerate this progress before the blacks turned to hating. In Paton's book, in fact, James Jarvis returned to Johannesburg to continue the work of his son. However, the Nationalists came into power, hope was destroyed, and many African and white intellectuals left South Africa. Since much of the trouble now centers in this city, many of the recent stories are laid there. In *Blanket Boy* Mopeli-Paulus' Basuto begins his conflict with white man's civilization in the City of Gold. The best description of African life there, told without bitterness, is Abrahams' autobiographical account in *Tell Freedom.* The coarsening effect of guilt felt by the white population is the subject matter of many of Nadine Gordimer's stories. Her novel, *A World of Strangers* (1958), shows the separation of the two parts of the life of the city and the degrading effect of such a separation. In 1950, a magazine, *Drum,* provided an outlet for African stories and sketches which are just now being made available in collections such as Peggy Rutherfoord's *African Voices.* The foreword is by Can Themba, whose own story "Mob Passion" demonstrates the hatred felt between different tribes among the African people even when settled in the city. Such stories are decried by Africans seeking for a national unity, but they do present the fact that the disunity among Africans is one of the real problems. Johannesburg is such a mass of conflicting forces that stories from many points of view must be read to fill out the picture. As seen by Nadine Gordimer in an article for the *New York Herald Book Review* in 1953, the city is not old Africa but "in the context of the social evolution now in progress throughout the whole continent, it is a perfect microcosm of African emergence: the reality and not the old dream."[4]

Several other subjects are introduced in Paton's novel which have been central in recent South African literature, among them African political developments. John Kumalo is a political voice, although a fearful one. Political maneuvers, such as the bus strike, are woven into the book, and real African politicians are included. The present political unrest in South Africa has been used in fiction in various ways. Most countries having colonial officers have been described from their viewpoint. Although South Africa is now a republic, as late as 1956 Nicholas Monsarrat, who spent six years of the preceding decade as director of the United Kingdom's Information Office in Johannesburg, published *The Tribe That Lost Its Head*, showing the values of enlightened colonialism and the dangers of unprincipled journalism. The view is not popular with African politicians. Cloete's *African Giant* in the preceding year had indicated that, although sympathizing with the African, the author had little hope of his emerging from his primitive state into civilized life without white help. The book fascinated Americans and seemed to have disappointed all sides in South Africa, especially the *Afrikaner* who had considered Cloete one of their own. Van der Post used as the basis of his counterspy story, *Flamingo Feather*, a widespread Communist plot to promote a rebellion by exploiting African superstitions.

But none of these viewpoints satisfy the African himself. Chief Luthuli, Nobel Prize winner, represents one kind of African political leader. Because he was influential as a speaker and leader of the African National Congress, the South African government in 1952 dismissed him as chief of the Umvoti Mission Reserve. In his defense Chief Luthuli said that he saw no real conflict in his dual leadership. Until such a dual role is allowed in South Africa there seems little hope of peace. The Chief in *Cry, the Beloved Country* was merely a government tool. Peter Abrahams, speaking on this problem in *Holiday* in which he describes his visit to Kenyetta in Kenya, makes clear the problem of the African leader, who belongs to neither culture. He is educated away from the tribe, which is ruled by its ancestors and allowed no place in the Western culture. This conflict was made the basis of his book, *A Wreath for Udomo*, in which the educated African who becomes the prime minister of an emerging African country is destroyed more by the superstitions of his own people than the prejudices of the Europeans. Abrahams ends his *Holiday* article with this belief:

> If the men inaugurating the new ways have the sense and the patience to preserve the finer qualities of the old ways and fuse these with the new, then we can expect something magnificently new out of Africa.[5]

It is something which the African teacher Mphahlele, when self-exiled from South Africa to Kenya, described in *The African Image*. It takes its political form neither from democracy nor communism, but from the African situation.

The danger of the broken tribe as described by Paton is that when the young African leaves the tribe and is admitted to no other social status, he is forced outside any moral code and may resort to crime and violence. This situation is the tragedy of Absalom. Racial violence and fear are the subject of many stories such as Harry Bloom's *Episode in the Transvaal* and Jacobson's *The Trap*. A few are caught between tribal loyalties and the law such as A. A. Murray's protagonist in *The Blanket*, or between tribal customs and white men's ways such as the primitive people in Cloete's *The Curve and the Tusk*.

Although African writing in part is similar to the writing which any modern society would produce, certain themes are distinctive of South African literature: the images of the whites as dominating, of the blacks as uncertain but with an increasing selfhood, a deep rapport with the land, a sense of the city as foundation of evil and wisdom, and a changing and sometimes violent social state, tribal and national.

These themes are represented by the narrative elements in the books which have been mentioned, but sometimes the writers deal directly with them as does Cloete in *The Third Way*, in which he calls for an immediate reappraisal of contemporary morals, and Van der Post in *The Dark Eye of Africa*, in which he speaks maturely of the degradation caused by the racial discrimination and of the human condition in general. Cloete in reviewing Van der Post's book emphasizes the fact that the problem is more spiritual than economic for the African fears losing the past and failing to gain the future. Cloete indicates that the problem may be more than African.

Because of the intensity of these themes, the greatest weakness in South African literature is that often pointed out in Paton's work, the tendency to present a thesis rather than create a work of art. The artists themselves are aware of the danger although Paton feels the two parts of himself can be separated since he does not want to give up either. He does his duty in public life until he has a desire to write a story; then he withdraws. Peter Abrahams, however, does not feel he can so separate himself. He says, "If I am ever liberated from this bondage of racialism, there are some things much more exciting to me, objectively, to write about . . . But this world has such a social orientation, and I am involved in this world and I can't cut myself off . . ."[6] Nadine Gordimer also feels this pull. She states that where thousands see all colored as menials, thousands see them as children to be cared for, and only a few hundred see them as men and women, the situation is bound to create an undertone in all personal life. Perhaps the insistence on the problem is a weakness; perhaps it is the strength of South African literature.

South African fiction and poetry are influenced by a bilingual culture and a multilingual country. When *The Turning Wheels* was published in 1937, complaint was made of what was called the stodginess of the Boer words—*baas, kopje, veldt*. Most of these words, plus many African words, have become commonplace in literature, but South African writers still self-consciously explain them. Also noticeable is the great influence of the rhythms of the King James version of the Bible. This is understandable since most Africans received their education through missionary efforts, most South African people are strongly religious, and the people respond poetically to the appeal of the land. The criticism that it is a contrived style comes from a lack of knowledge of the people who use it.

How important is the study of South African literature to an American? At the moment, according to George Shepperson in an article in *The Nation*, there is a scholarly scramble for African materials as African countries force themselves more and more to the front of world news.[7] I think that South African literature should be studied because it deals directly and forcefully with the greatest problem of our time, the problem of moral order in the world.

The study of South African literature presents problems because of the scantiness of cultural exchange between the continents. Also since a great deal of the contemporary thinking in South Africa is being done in language other than English, our knowledge may be lopsided. Nonetheless South African literature in English probably gives us the best picture of the African since the South African black man is more sophisticated than most and more knowledge is available from that country in our own language. The time for study may be now or never. Many of the artists discussed have already left—Abrahams left during World War II for England and is now, I believe, in Jamaica; Mphahlele went to Nigeria; Doris Lessing has become an angry young woman in England; and Dan Jacobson has made his home there also. Van der Post is writing about Japan, and Plomer writes from England. Nadine Gordimer and Alan Paton remain, but Mr. Paton at least is being carefully watched. In time these voices may be silenced or too far away to use the materials.

But whatever the future, the writers have spoken, and according to Can Themba in his introduction to *African Voices* a new culture is arising in which "Africans are creating out of English a language of their own. . . ."[8] Robie Macaulay foresees a national consciousness formed by its literature rather than the consciousness producing the literature. Van der Post conjectures that Africa was left undiscovered so long because "it was miraculously preserved for precisely this hard-pressed moment in time."[9] Recalling Camoëns' version of the Vision of Vasco da Gama in which the last of the Titans appeared and said he was turned to stone "because he had dared to love a white nymph of the sea who rejected him," Van der Post sees a prophetic allegory that Africa would be turned to stone for the men of the white world because they denied Africa their love. "But once loved for its own sake, it could live again for the white man, a Promethean Titan bringing the light of a greater fire of life into the dark hour of the European."[10]

Besides the value which a study of this literature has to offer for itself, the literature offers parallels to our own situation which are easier to examine objectively. The two countries were colonized at almost exactly the same time, the land was taken over from a native people, the land was settled by sturdy pioneering people who fought for its possession; these settlers brought their European culture with them, and they experienced a Civil War. The same problems of prejudice of race and religion exist both places. Our writers—Richard Wright, Countee Cullen, and James Baldwin—are known to the Africans.

However, it is possible to carry the likenesses too far. As much may be seen by the differences as the similarities. The separation of people there is much greater. The whites are much in the minority; the blacks have a culture of their own. The great numbers of Asians have only a loose sense of identity with each other but are regarded as a special group by the rest. All whites are called Europeans; the blacks are Africans to themselves, "native" or "kaffirs" to the Europeans. Both terms are offensive. "Coloreds" are a particular group of mixed races. *Negro* is beginning to be used as a general and innocuous term although historically it was not a term used for South African peoples. An older English colonist even though he may be third or fourth generation calls himself British; his grandsons, however, may call themselves South African.

It might be wise at the end of this overview to look at what one of these South African writers has seen in us. Dan Jacobson's first view of America was San Francisco when he arrived in 1957 to attend Leland Stanford University as a fellow in creative writing. Although less than thirty, he had already published four books. He has recorded his impressions of his view of Americans in *No Further West, Californians,* at first horrified by our gross overabundance and then charmed by what he considered the real quietness of our beings. His real complaint is against the intellectual who surrenders to total despair and against all who in our environment of abundance do not make of it what we could.

As I said at the beginning of my paper, Alan Paton finished *Cry, the Beloved Country* in San Francisco. These South African writers, Paton and Jacobson, saw their country in perspective in America. Perhaps their works can give Americans the same kind of perspective. As well as looking to our European literary parentage, we, English teachers and students, might do well to see what our African cousins are doing who live in the same world with the same inherited problems.

NOTES

1. Peter Abrahams, *Return to Goli* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), p. 18.
2. Alan Paton, "Death of a Tsotsi," *Tales from a Troubled Land* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 106.
3. Alan Paton, "South Africa," *The World of Mankind,* ed. *Holiday Magazine* (New York: Golden Press, 1962), p. 168.
4. "Nadine Gordimer in Johannesburg," *New York Herald Book Review,* XXX (October 11, 1953), 20.
5. Peter Abrahams, "The Blacks," *The World of Mankind,* ed. *Holiday Magazine* (New York: Golden Press, 1962), p. 167.
6. "Peter Abrahams," *Current Biography Yearbook, 1957* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1957), p. 5.
7. George Shepperson, "Africa: The Scholarly Scramble," *Nation,* CXCV (December 8, 1962), 405–407.
8. Peggy Rutherfoord (ed.), *African Voices* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1960), p. 5.
9. Laurens Van der Post, "Portrait of a Continent," *The World of Mankind,* ed. *Holiday Magazine* (New York: Golden Press, 1962), p. 153.
10. *Ibid.*

THE NOVEL IN NIGERIA

Harold R. Collins

In the first waves of written literature from Nigeria, what are the authors writing about? Harold Collins finds their subject matter to be the sometimes incongruous cultural customs coming together from Western and native traditions. Through these novels, readers of English get first-hand knowledge of the tribal ways of living in old Nigeria and the influence of diverse cultures upon each other in New Nigeria. Harold Collins stresses particularly the interpretation of the past which each author makes.

Among the Nigerians currently writing in English are five very interesting novelists—Amos Tutuola, T. M. Aluko, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, and Onuora Nzekwu.[1] Although their novels are not so popular in their own country as nonfiction, especially manuals of conduct (*How to Succeed in Life, How to Avoid Enemies and Bad Company, Money Hard But Some Women Don't Know*), they are gradually becoming known to a world audience as part of world literature. Cast in the forms of the European realistic novel or the African folktale, the beliefs, the motivation, the customs, and the daily lives of the characters of these novels are distinctly African and strange to Western readers. This essay will describe the Anglo-Nigerian novels, emphasizing their treatment of the traditional African culture.

Amos Tutuola stands apart from the other four authors to be reviewed in that his prose works are not novels in the traditional sense but folk romances or extended folktales. In Nigeria, his work arouses controversy as to its merit, but men of no less stature than Dylan Thomas and V. S. Pritchett have praised it. It poses fascinating questions of literary acculturation and is important as literature, beloved as it is by readers on several continents.

It is not easy to describe the romances or "ghost novels" of Amos Tutuola. We must start as I have said by insisting that they are not really novels; their mode of fiction is not realistic but fantastic or marvelous; the characters are drawn with a naive but credible realism, without psychological complexity. The ogres and spirits are simple and undeveloped, the heroes and heroines are ideal, and the villains and villainesses purely demonic; nor do the characters move in a context of social relations, as in the novel, but exhibit their quite considerable derring-do in "another world" of picaresque adventure. Those who are familiar with African folktales would get a good idea of Tutuola's romances if they were to imagine a number of these tales gathered up and held together, sometimes rather loosely, by the common mythical plot—a quest. Drinkard's search for his dead tapster friend in Deads' Town is the mythical quest to the underworld (reminding us of Orpheus, Hercules, Theseus, Odysseus, and Dante). The quest involves Drinkard and his plucky wife in "uncountable" ordeals and adventures—mostly preternatural—with such worthies as Death, the Skull, the crazy and cruel creatures of Unreturnable Heaven's Town, Faithful Mother, the Red People, the prince-killer, the hostile dead babies, and Hungry Creature. The book ends, not with the discovery of the dead tapster, but with the relief of a famine in a cosmic finale!

Tutuola's other romances are also based on the quest pattern. *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* describes the hero-narrator's twenty-four years of wandering on his way home from the frightful "bad bush" full of odd and usually malevolent spirits (among them Smelling-Ghost, Burglar-ghosts, the short ghosts, Flash-eyed Mother, Super Lady, and the Television-handed Ghostess). This ghost novel is even more like a West African

Odyssey. *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* details Simbi's quest for the "poverties and punishments" of life. Rather overwhelmed than disappointed in this quest, she is enslaved, beaten, nailed in a coffin, and dumped in a river, almost sacrificed to the "spirit of a king's head," assaulted by a crazed companion, almost executed for theft, trapped in a hollow log, divebombed by a "phoenix bird," fastened to a rock, and beaten "greedily" by the Satyr's followers. (The list of punishments gives some notion of the full life Tutuola's heroes and heroines live.) *The Brave African Huntress* relates the dauntless heroine's quest for her four hunter brothers who have been killed or "detained" by the hostile pigmies; she means to "kill or drive the whole pigmies away from that jungle" and to kill all the dangerous wild animals. And after being cruelly manhandled by the pigmies, the Brave African Huntress does just that, kills all the wild animals, blows up the pigmy camp, shoots down most of the pigmies, and rescues her brothers, together with some other home village men. The quest in the *Feather Woman of the Jungle* is the narrator's search for money to relieve the poverty and pay the debts of his parents; the new chief of a village is narrating to his villagers six of his "journeys" or fortune-hunting adventures, in ten "entertainments" or storytelling sessions, accompanied by the Nigerian amenities—dancing and palm-wine drinking. The narrator's adventures with such notables as the Feather Woman, the King of the Bush of Quietness, the savage people, the Queen of the River, the Queen of the Diamonds, and the Hairy Giant and Giantess are sufficiently exciting and bizarre.

All this wild and wonderful stuff of a Yoruba imagination is written in Tutuola's "junior clerk English," a compound of West African vulgate English, schoolboy English, officialese, pidgin (just a touch), and the mistakes and inspired inventions of a half-educated genius. Perhaps some of you will some day hear a Tutuola fan, as he bends over the bright-colored Faber volumes, whistling and chuckling at such items as "I did not satisfy with it . . . the rest warned her whisperly . . . I was shaking together with my voice . . . I did not leak out the secret . . . I fed up to be alive any more . . . no shoes could size his feet in this world . . . And at last, as the king was running away for his life, the crown fell off from his head but he was unable to wait and take it back."

In *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* and *The Brave African Huntress,* there is some falling off in the power of the language and in the variety and interest of the incidents, but the last novel, *Feather Woman of the Jungle,* is a gratifying recovery.

A word about the reception of Tutuola's works in Nigeria. With some exceptions his compatriots were at first simply horrified by the books. It was bad enough to work with the folktales that one had heard from his grandmother or had read in the Penguin collection, but surely they were not suitable for modern fiction. And the crudities, the errors, the crazy, improper English! And all those superstitions! Nigerian critics now, however, are taking a more sensible view of Tutuola's works. As an expatriate teacher from Nigeria once told this writer: "Young writers like Wole Soyinka see the joke of it; a little guy out of the back of nowhere just steps up and wows the supercilious European critics."

The novelist in Nigeria has a peculiar difficulty in his work; he must take some sort of position toward the old Africa, the pristine, the so-called (and improperly called) pagan Africa before European contact. Should he consider this past a kind of golden age spoiled by the white intruders or a nightmare from which he is trying to awake, or what? His society being in a phase of conspicuous and rapid change under Western influence, he cannot escape judging the African whence and the Westernized whither of such change. He must assume the progressive stance (like Ekwensi) or the reactionary (like Achebe and Nzekwu) or some other position (like Tutuola).

Amos Tutuola has not been the least bit embarrassed by the difficulty. He has accepted the old way of life, including some of the less creditable elements like human sacrifice, and perhaps even exaggerated the old-African preoccupation with spirits, gods, and the revered ancestors. Tutuola has conveyed this rather feverish, hag-ridden vision of old Africa in a kind of dreamlike phantasmagoria.

But perhaps it is misleading to say that Tutuola accepts the traditional way of life; he simply renders it—or as some Nigerian nationalists would say, renders a nightmarish distortion of it—with emphasis on the traditional African's preoccupation with malevolent spirits and magical transformations. And yet at the same time Tutuola, a great artist of the unconscious sort, manages to be hopeful and excited about Western instruments, customs, and institutions, his syncretism or grafting of Western ways and gear into Yoruba folk myths (especially in the episodes involving the Super Lady and the Methodist Church of the Bush of Ghosts) is one of the most interesting aspects of his art. Surely, Tutuola's is one reasonable way, though of course not the only reasonable way, of relating to the African past. The virtues of his folk heroes still have some relevance for modern life; his old-time horrors have relevance for our dreams at least and possibly for our unconscious. At any rate, Tutuola is able to admit the worst in the old ways without apology and the best in the new ways without excessive deference to the Westerners.

What is the significance of Tutuola's work then? He made available to the world the human values of the Yoruba folktales, in a way the folktale collectors could never do. He is in the true Yoruba tradition of the professional storytellers, the *akpalo kpatita,* but he performs in every place in the world where there are readers. This fairly catholic reader believes his work will endure for the vigor and interest of his language (never mind the errors), the force and economy of his storytelling, his fertile imagination, his wild humor, and the compelling power of his nightmare flights, tortures, horrors, ogres, and transformations. What all Nigerian novelists could well borrow from him, whatever sort of novels they write, is his verve and splendid assurance, for he is unembarrassed by the African past, Western technology, or indeed anything else.

The novels that we shall now survey are true novels, featuring realistic characters in realistic social relations; they are written in conventional, standard English, though only Achebe's style has much distinction and Aluko, Ekwensi, and Nzekwu occasionally commit journalese. Unlike Tutuola with his elementary school education and his modest job as storekeeper for the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, these novelists all have college educations and hold important positions. Aluko is City Engineer for Lagos; Ekwensi is the director of the Nigerian information service; Achebe is director of the external services of the NBC; and Nzekwu is the editor of *Nigeria Magazine.* Aluko, like Tutuola, is a Yoruba, that is, a member of the most important tribe of the Western Region; Ekwensi, Achebe, and Nzekwu are all Ibos, that is, belong to the most important tribe of the Eastern Region.

Perhaps it is impossible to say just what T. M. Aluko's *One Man, One Wife* is principally about. It deals with the conflict in a Yoruba village between the Christian mission and the adherents of the traditional religion, especially the worship of the smallpox god and the god of thunder, but many of the incidents have no connection with this issue. It deals also with the disgrace of the Christian schoolmaster Royasin and his subsequent rise to local prestige as a professional letter writer, the marital problems of the Christian elder Joshua and of several other characters, and the intrigues of the village chief Lotun and his senile cronies. These not very well integrated story interests contribute such varied excitements as marriages, divorces, disappearances, court cases, a sound beating, a man going mad, and deaths by childbirth, stroke of lightning, and smallpox.

Aluko's novel seems to me to be a comic novel; possibly it has been too severely handled by Nigerian critics, offended by Aluko's ridiculing of many Yoruba customs and beliefs. (It must be admitted that an expatriate professor from the University of Ibadan who has met Aluko has told me that Aluko simply could not have written a comic novel.) At any rate, Aluko makes fun of missionary style Christianity and Westernized manners, or manners half Western and half traditional. The Christian convert who believes in witchcraft and magic soap and the white pastor who speaks cant to his schoolteacher and seems entirely ignorant of his parishioner's traditional beliefs get as good whacks as such traditionalists as the thoroughly corrupt agents of the Oba (or native king), the hard-drinking and garrulous old village fathers (who would like to proceed vigorously against the Christians and give human sacrifices to the old gods but dare not for fear of the whites), and the old chief who regrets that the whites do not allow the execution of thieves and witches and the sacrificing of slaves. Perhaps Aluko is funniest about that figure of acculturation, Royasin, who gains power and prestige in a function made necessary by the ineptitude of the Western style justice.

Royasin becomes J. Ade Royanson, Esq. (a tonier name), "Public Letter Writer and Notary/Friend of the Illiterate/Advocate of the Oppressed." His style of writing is grandiloquent, with a kind of doubling technique: "tale of woe and persecution and perpetrated and perpetuated . . . ."

The novel ends with a prophetic vision of the good things to come to this corner of Yorubaland with Westernization—"emancipated women," the burning of idols, the people turning their backs on their "sordid past," well-educated, clean, healthy children who pass on to their families at home their teachers' instructions on the guinea worm and the tapeworm—which all sounds suspiciously bombastic. Conceivably Aluko has his tongue in his cheek, especially since the visionary of this progressive vision is a tatterdemalion prophet, wild of beard and torn of clothes, who has lost his mind, doesn't recognize his own fiancee, and insists that he has never had a father.

We might define Aluko's attitude toward the African past as easy-going, disrespectful contempt or ill-informed, superficial abuse, depending upon how we read the novel, and there is some ambiguity in the attitude, no matter how we read it.

Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City*—Nigeria's first regular novel—is largely an account of the romantic complications of a young Lagos reporter and bandleader Amusa Sango. A moral lightweight, Amusa flits from girl to girl without much apparent cause: Aina, a shoplifter; Beatrice, mistress of a British engineer; Elina, a convent-bred girl his family has chosen for him; and a second Beatrice, from a rather formidably conservative aristocratic family, whom he rather implausibly marries. A grasping Nigerian landlord and a ne'er-do-well friend are fairly prominent in the novel. Amusa has slight twinges of nationalist sentiment during a coal strike involving police violence and at the funeral of a nationalist hero; the theme of getting ahead in a disorderly Lagos suffering from acute shortages in jobs and housing glimmers in the novel, but neither interest is as important as the girl-chasing and the good-timing. What comes through best in the novel is the vitality, the interest, and the squalor of the federal capital of Nigeria.

Ekwensi's novels pretty much ignore the African past. In his *People of the City,* his rather insouciant hero never visits his native village, and the one reference to the older customs concerns the affair of a department store clerk who commits suicide because the secret society he has joined to get advancement has required him to sacrifice his firstborn son. The episode, though it may have some foundation in the real life of present-day Lagos, seems in the novel melodramatic and incredible. And Ekwensi takes no pains to indicate that the secret society—which is barely mentioned in passing—is a degenerate form of an institution that once had a legitimate social function. The novel is very thin in its time dimensions: The characters seem to have no antecedents—no family, no traditions, scarcely any memories.

The new rootless, detribalized, urban life of Lagos pictured in the novel has a rather sordid look to it, especially such things as the get-rich-quick rack-renting of the calloused Nigerian landlord, the frequent bribing for scarce jobs and housing, the frightful slums, the uninhibited cohabitations and casual affairs, the money madness, and the general predominance of shabby values; such unlovely features of Westernized life might well have been contrasted effectively with the saner, more moral, socially more wholesome traditional life, but that life is not even glimpsed in the novel. As a matter of fact, besides his evident pleasure in the exuberance and flamboyance of Lagos, the novelist's values are not very clear.

Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* relates the affairs (in several senses) of a fashionably dressed, attractive, middle aged courtesan of Lagos. Jagua Nana (that is, jaguar woman Nana) is one of the most convincing characters so far produced in Anglo-Nigerian literature, though the reader never understands very well why she takes up with or leaves her various lovers, among them the young school teacher Freddie Namme (the most important lover), the young thief Dennis Odoma, Chief Ofubara of a remote Niger delta town, and the unscrupulous politician Uncle Taiwo. As in the earlier novel, the rather untidy moral atmosphere is not judged by author commentary or a reliable narrator or "reflector." Also the descriptions of Jagua Nana and of Nancy Oll, Freddie's younger girl friend, seem to me to hover just *over* the border between good taste and vulgarity.

As in the earlier novel, Ekwensi is more successful in his social observations than in his constructive powers or his characterization. His social notations are often sharp and effective; for instance, the Tropicana Club, "this modern super sex market"; the girl gas station attendants in space suits, the middle aged sunburnt white man escorting a "young and buxom" Nigerian beauty through a department store, the prostitutes soliciting along the road in the car lights, the ranting politicians surrounded by their "body guards." As in the earlier novel the somewhat sluttish charms of Nigeria's chief city come through clear and strong.

In *Jagua Nana* the African past is not very conspicuous, but it is not entirely absent. Jagua Nana visits her home village twice, the second time for about a year to take care of her mother during the mourning period for her father. Both times she is happy and rested in this quiet place, where the evening recreation for young girls is dancing, singing, and telling folktales, but the villagers are sketched in very lightly, and not much of the traditional life shows. It is all on the order of "In Ogabu the people tilled the soil and drank river water and ate yams and went to church but came home to worship their own family oracles." In her visit to the home village of Freddie Namme in the Niger delta, Jagua Nana has some contact with traditional customs, but the descriptions are superficial, like "men ran after goats, and capturing them slashed off their heads. Fowls were taken and their blood spilt on the family altars." A Lagos taxi driver's neurotic wife nags him mercilessly because he will not buy her a hundred dollar dress for a funeral (to the knowing, a reference to the frightfully expensive traditional funerals of the Ibos and Yorubas). One evening the Tropicana offers its customers a modernized version of a traditional dance; Uncle Taiwo's boredom and disgust are more clearly rendered than the details of the performance.

In this novel Ekwensi does explicitly contrast the shabbier elements of Lagos life—like the insistent lustfulness, the crooked and violent politics, the ostentatious dressing, the larceny, and the passion for money—with the more wholesome village life; but the rural scenes are never effectively done in telling detail, especially the traditional manners and beliefs.

Ekwensi's third novel need not concern us much. It treats of the wanderings of Mai Sunsaye, an old Fulani cattleman of Northern Nigeria. The relations between the Western and Fulani cultures in this novel are engagingly simple: The Fulani flee from Dr. MacMinter, lest he inoculate them with the fearful needle; they flee from the tax officials (and divide up their herds) to avoid heavy taxation. The treatment of Fulani customs has the superficiality of a boy's book. The old cattleman's enemies have afflicted him with the *Sukugo* or wandering sickness (a strange condition recognized in native folklore). We get some notion of the *sharro* or whipping ordeal young men entering upon manhood are expected to undergo. But that is about all. The question of the relation of the old and new in Africa never really arises.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (yes, the title is from Yeats' "Second Coming") is certainly the best Nigerian novel in English. It recounts the rise and the downfall of a highly successful Ibo—successful in wrestling, fighting, farming, and the status-achieving so conspicuous in Ibo culture. It also details the disintegration of the traditional Ibo culture under the impact of the missions and of the British administration. The successful Ibo, Okonkwe, is harsh and impatient with his family and with less successful men, largely because he is ashamed of his reckless father. Okonkwo is brought down by his own reckless belligerence and two misfortunes: his seven-year exile prescribed by native custom for his accidental killing of a man at a funeral and a feud between the villagers and a district officer during which Okonkwo murders an insolent court messenger.

In this novel Achebe's attitude toward the African past is perhaps best described as nostalgia. With loving care and in a manner to engage the reader's sympathies, he describes such Ibo customs and observances as the wrestling matches, the consultations of the Agba oracle, the Week of Peace, the recital of folktales, the surrendering of a hostage for blood guilt, the new yam festival, the ceremonious bride price negotiations, the *uri* celebration for a new bride-to-be, a domestic relations trial before the *egwugwu* maskers, an Ibo funeral, Ibo prayers, and Ibo town meetings. These anthropological details are worked in very unobtrusively in such a way as not to impede the movement of the story or to distract from the interest of the characterization.

Achebe seems to see the advent of European civilization as an almost unmitigated disaster for his Ibo town. He shows us the effects of the intrusion as they would appear to respectable, honorable, religious Ibos of some standing in the community. From this point of view the European presence produces some very bad effects. The clan is split into Christian and traditional factions. The district officer dispenses justice ignorantly, without knowledge of Ibo customary law or even the language; his native subordinates are dishonest, given to bullying, and thoroughly unsympathetic, being aliens. The missionaries often scorn the traditional religion because they are completely ignorant about it. The first converts are slaves, outcasts, abandoned twins, not men of substance. The white man's education is useful, but mostly to give Ibos the chance to avoid being managed by insolent aliens. The white man's medicine is helpful, and the increased trade is gratifying, but the white man's religion and government are pretty much madness, confusion, and scandal.

The only traditional matters that Achebe presents in a bad light are Okonkwo's cruel exile for an accidental killing, the custom of exposing twins, the ostracising of the *Osu* caste (a group dedicated to the gods), and the slaughter of the hostage as required by the oracle. (Surely Achebe has idealized the old life if he finds nothing else to deplore?) Nwoye, Okonkwo's sensitive and tender-hearted son, is troubled about the twins and the slaughtered boy, his friend and playmate, and the scene of the killing is very moving, but the reader doesn't identify with Nwoye, really, nor is he made to see the cruel customs as invalidating what is presented as a full, rich, reasonable, and satisfying way of life. In this novel Achebe scarcely seems reconciled to the coming of the white man.

Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (the title from Eliot's "Journey of the Magi") traces the corruption through bribery of Obi Okonkowo, grandson of the Okonkwo of the previous novel and senior civil service officer with the Scholarship Committee. Obi had got his college degree from England, borrowing money from the Umuofia Progressive Union, a mutual assistance organization of his Ibo fellow townsmen living in Lagos. In maintaining his hardwon social status, helping his family with medical and school expenses, and paying for an abortion for his girl friend (of the tabooed *Osu* caste), he finally succumbs to the persistent temptation, takes bribes, is caught and disgraced. (Somehow Achebe makes Obi's money troubles more convincing than his decline into bribery.)

In this novel Achebe seems distinctly unenthusiastic about modern urban life in Nigeria; he makes it look cheap and shoddy. And usually the shoddier elements of that life have a Western source or inspiration, like Obi's friend's pillow with the multicolored OSCULATE sewn on it, his friend's girl friend with her "pneumatic bosom under a tight-fitting red and yellow dress," the slum street with the rotting dead dog in the gutter, the constant bribery among Nigerian officials, young and old, European and African, the Long Life Mixture good for "Feaver and dogbight," the big free-spending politician with the thirty-five-thousand-dollar home and the big American car, the casual adultery at the Lagos beach front, the thievery, the cheap, vulgar high life songs.

On the other hand, the best things in modern life in Nigeria that the novel notices have their source in the traditional life, like the wonderful folksy, proverb laden speeches at the Umuofia Progressive Union, the prayers (both traditional and Christian) full of folk wisdom and Ibo "local color," the amusing wise and naive conversation of the old conservatives of Umuofia, the young women serenading Obi with a traditional song so obviously more admirable and chaste than the high life songs.

Several explicit "nationalistic" or "reactionary" remarks of Obi's on the relations between the traditional and Western ways, since they are given without author's comment, may express the views of Achebe himself. The most elequent of these remarks has a touch of bitterness: "Let them [the British] come to Umuofia now and listen to the talk of men who made a great art of conversation. Let them come and see men and women and children who knew how to live, whose joy of life had not been killed by those who claimed to teach other nations how to live."

Probably the most conservative of the Nigerian novelists, that is, the one most sympathetic to the old African beliefs and customs, is Onuoura Nzekwu. Nzekwu's *Wand of Noble Wood* concerns the marriage problems of a young Ibo journalist Peter Obiese, who cannot marry according to Ibo custom until his two elder brothers do so and cannot marry his detribalized mistress, who bears him a son, because his relatives would not accept her. A cousin's wife and an uncle, acting as marriage brokers, find a suitable Ibo girl (who dances magnificently at a funeral ceremony and who has, luckily, admired him from a distance). Peter's family make the traditional arrangements, hold family councils presided over by the *Okpala,* the family priest-chief, send a delegation to the girl's family, and hold the bride-price ceremony, and all these traditional observances are minutely and sympathetically described by Peter, the hero-narrator, as matters worthy of affectionate respect.

The Western reader is likely to be slightly put out by the hero's callous treatment of his tabooed sweetheart, and his extremely conservative insistence on perfect endogamy in his marriage, and downright annoyed by the business of the *iyi ocha* curse which at first hinders Peter's marriage and then causes the suicide of the bride, and by the utterly incredible affair of the *living* goat's heart hidden under old man Agbata's bed. The Western reader is also likely to wince at the elaborate burial ceremony and funeral of the bride, the mortuary practices of the Ibos being as barbarous as ours and considerably more malodorous. Since Peter's friend Reggie and the West Indian girl Nora who discuss Peter's marital problems and take a much less traditional view of them than Peter, do not seem to speak for the author and since there is no author commentary to indicate otherwise, we are likely to feel that Peter's views on marriage are the author's. And Peter's noncommittal attitude toward the *iyi ocha* curse and the goat's heart hocus-pocus makes us wonder whether the enlightenment of the author or his novelistic skill is at fault.

It is only fair to add that Peter clearly deplores the repulsive features of Ibo funeral customs and that his views are, by an interesting technical device, the "voice" of archconservative old Uncle Azoba speaking in Peter's mind, shown to be very far from purely traditionalist. And curiously enough, Peter and his bride, brought together and betrothed in traditional modes, believe in love and write each other love letters! Incidentally, there are some odd cultural confrontations in this novel; for instance, after attending the complicated observances in the jungle shrine to remove the *iyi ocha* curse, Peter goes to his uncle's home and listens to the BBC. Among its gifts from supplicants the shrine has academic hoods, refrigerators, and radios.

This novel suggests that the educated urban Africans are considerably less deprived of their traditional religious and social beliefs than we have sometimes supposed. Of all the novels under consideration it is the most heavily weighted with accounts of the old ways. Occasionally the reader may feel he is being lectured at.

In Nzekwu's second novel, *A Blade Among the Boys,* probably the worst novel of those discussed here, the attitude toward the African heritage is not easily defined. The conflict between Patrick Ikenga's desire to be a Catholic priest and his family's expectation that he would assume his inherited office as the *Okpala* or family priest-chief never really gets rendered, partly because we are never made to feel the attraction of the Catholic preisthood for Patrick, as we are made to feel respect for the traditional religious system and made to feel the naturalness and propriety of Patrick's becoming the *Okpala.* The maneuvers of Patrick's ex-fiancee (chosen by his family) to snatch him from the church by love potion and seduction are melodramatic, incredible, and just plain silly, and they scarcely impugn Christianity. Though we are often invited to look into Patrick's mind, that mind is so irresolute that it can hardly convey a clear attitude toward the African past.

For a Western reader the novel is most interesting in its expression of various kinds of anti-Christian sentiments from conservative Ibos and the hero himself on those occasions when he is wobbling *away* from the church. Patrick's Uncle Anonye, in a long, rather stilted harangue, complains that the missionaries had called the deeply religious Ibos pagan, had bored them with dull sermons (which the Ibos listened to only because the missionaries dispensed dresses, kerosene, and tobacco), had used the schools and even the hospitals to propagate an alien faith, and had even foolishly ignored the traditional faith that was such a vital part of Ibo life. The old man counsels Patrick to bear the school discipline patiently for the sake of the European education, so necessary for getting ahead in the world. Patrick himself complains that in the parochial schools Africans are forced to practice the alien religious rites and warned to avoid the traditional rites, though such avoidance alienates them from their families and though Christian Ibos held up as models often in fact secretly participate in the traditional ceremonies. At least when he is full of his grudge against the priests, Christianity seems to him alien, too "meditative," and opposed to his temperament. In this mood the traditional religion looks more attractive, for "it consists of ritual feasts held in a lively atmosphere which conjures up within you the right emotional feelings."

Patrick's uncle gets him a job on the railroad by bribing an official, and Patrick himself, as a railroad official, takes bribes freely, but Nzekwu is presumably not suggesting that Westernization has brought bribery into Nigeria, for Patrick's pressing need for money that motivates the bribery is due to obligations rooted in the traditional way of life. He wants to help his family fight lawsuits over land. As *Okpala* by birthright, he feels responsible for the family lands.

In spite of the good scenes—such as Patrick's initiation, the intolerant lady missionary's brush with the masked embodiments of the ancestral spirits, Patrick's mother's wild demonstration to make the seminary give up her son—and the very interesting details on Ibo customs, *A Blade Among the Boys* is too weak in its motivation and its thematic development to give a clear impression of the novelist's view of the conflict of cultures. However, though the evidence in this novel and the previous one is inconclusive, it looks as though Nzekwu belongs to the "reactionary" literary party. Nzekwu seems to accept too much of the old African way of life, though of course the fault may lie with the novelistic technique.

NOTES

1. Babatunde Jones' novel, recently published in Switzerland, was unavailable at the time of my writing, as was Aluko's second novel, *One Man, One Machet*, and Gabriel Okara's novel, *Okolo*, an experimental novel written in an English translated literally—syntax and all—from Okara's native Ijaw. (The first chapter of this novel is published in the tenth number of the important Nigerian literary journal, *Black Orpheus.*) Considerations of time and space have persuaded me not to discuss Ekwensi's children's stories—*The Passport of Mallam Ilia, The Drummer Boy,* and An *African Night's Entertainment*—and to give only brief attention to his rather slight short novel, *Burning Grass* (Heinemann, 1962).

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